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Memorial Fund





# SADNESS AND GLADNESS.

A

STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

THE HON. ADELA SIDNEY.

“

AUTHOR OF

“HOME AND ITS INFLUENCE.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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# SADNESS AND GLADNESS.

A TALE.

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## CHAPTER I.

Friends should associate friends in weal and woe.

BYRON.

WHEN Mabel was once more left alone, she sat down to reflect on her great misfortune, and to consider what could be done. Her father was going again to Naples on the following day, and Mr. Edwardes had, it was true, taken care of her until this hour; but, on the express condition that she was to support herself by her talents when she was old enough. If all chance of that was lost, would he continue to support her in luxury? Ought it to be so; would her father's pride allow it?

And, if he did not, Mr. Gascoigne's small income would be quite insufficient to afford them both the means of existence, particularly if he

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still indulged in the extravagant habits he had lately acquired. Something must be done ; she could not sit down in idleness, and doom him as well as herself to poverty.

Besides, a notice had appeared in the English papers some years back announcing her death. Who put it in, or how it got there, Mabel did not know ; but, she remembered that her father took no trouble to contradict it, and by appearing among his friends in mourning had tended to strengthen the report.

If Mabel Gascoigne were dead it would appear strange for Mabel Delville to live in the same house, and be intimate with Mr. Gascoigne, when, as it would be believed, they were no relations : she must continue to dwell with Susanne, and by giving lessons or exerting herself in some other way, support them both.

Mabel was not one to lose her time in vain regrets. She had strength of will to carry her through any disagreeable duties if once undertaken ; and though her fondest hopes had been so cruelly destroyed she did not suffer

herself to indulge in vain regrets; it was her disposition—and a most enviable one it is—to view every object on the brightest side.

She determined at once to know if she might indulge hope or not; and persuading Susanne to accompany her, she hastened to consult an eminent singing master, who she imagined would give her a candid opinion.

In walking through the streets she was in continual fear of meeting Mr. Edwardes, for she wanted to know the worst before she again saw him. They reached the house at the moment Signor Allegretto was leaving it to give lessons: he could not wait, but he said he should be at home in the evening; but evening did not suit Mabel, and, very unwillingly, she agreed to call again the next morning. She passed all that evening in a state of great agitation; neither her father, nor Mr. Edwardes came near her, and late at night she received a note telling her that business had detained them, and that they were to proceed together early the next day to Naples. Mabel felt very sad that they should go and leave her

thus in misery. She was not surprised that her father should do so; but Mr. Edwardes, who seldom allowed a day to pass without visiting her, and who appeared so much interested in every thing that concerned her—it was very odd that he should take no notice of her misfortune.

Well as she imagined she knew him, she could not have thought of the cause which kept him away. He had long admired her decision of character, her bright manner of viewing things; and he wished to know if in evil days she would fulfil the promise of happier hours; how she would act under the pressure of misery, and what, if any, course of life she would decide upon, unassisted.

It was, perhaps, subjecting her to a very severe trial, for she could not even write to him, as he had not told her his direction; but, as she conducted herself in this case, so would it influence his future behaviour to her. He had known so many, promising fair in prosperity, who had not been able to stand the trials of evil fortune.

Mabel determined to know her fate on the following morning ; but, in the course of the night Susanne was taken ill,—so ill that it was necessary to send for a physician, and his report was so unsatisfactory that Mabel durst not leave her for a moment. She had complained of not feeling quite well for several days, but Mabel was unprepared for such an intense illness as this. It so happened that she had never been with any one who was ill ; she had heard of it, certainly, but seeing illness is very different from hearing of it, and she was in continual fear lest, in her total inexperience, she should not follow out exactly the doctor's directions: she was terrified, also, lest he should not understand the case, and the bare thought of losing Susanne was agony. How she longed for some one to advise her ; some one on whom to lean. For the first time the whole strength of her character was called forth ; — she had to act for herself.

She watched by the bed-side of her faithful friend, day and night, until the physician allowed her to hope, telling her that time

might effect wonders, and that he trusted immediate danger was passed.

Mabel, who had been calm and composed the whole time, on hearing this good news burst into tears. She had hitherto been too much occupied to think ; a dull weight of care had, as it were, transformed her to stone ; but now, in the moment when hope revived, did she first feel how dreadful the loss would have been to her, and how intently her feelings were bound up in the friend of her childhood.

She returned to her, and gazed on the pale wan cheek, and those sunken eyes ; and all her many kindnesses passed in review before her. Ever since her mother's death Susanne had been more than a mother to her, and a most judicious friend besides. Every good feeling, every just action she owed to her, who had never lost an opportunity of improving her moral character, and of inciting her to cultivate her talent.

And her love, how precious it had been ! Mabel felt she could not live without love.

Her father had little to spare for any one but himself; and Mr. Edwardes, though very well-meaning, and a generous friend to her, was not a person whom she could exactly love—at least not like Susanne. She could not tell him every thought, every fancy which arose in her mind; and he had left her in her wretchedness, when the warm sympathy of Susanne had been doubly grateful to her.

Mabel slept that night on the sofa in Susanne's room, and so lightly that at the least movement of the invalid she was by her side, but she slept better than she had yet done, and the next visit of the medical man confirmed her hopes. "Madame Delville was decidedly better."

Mabel asked if it were safe to leave her for an hour or two; but he, observing how tired and exhausted Mademoiselle Delville herself looked, advised her to put off any business till the morrow, and the poor girl again gave up the visit she was so anxious to make,—that visit which was to decide the fate of her future life. But on the following day, when she had



assured herself that it was not unsafe to leave her dear Susanne to the care of the servant, she walked forth, for the first time in her life, alone.

Signor Allegretto was fortunately disengaged, and evidently surprised to see the pale and anxious countenance of one whose successful performance in the *Tempest* he had witnessed, having assisted Mr. Mordaunt in the arrangement of the theatre. But when she disclosed the reason for her visit, his exclamations of surprise and concern did not tend to comfort her.

If he bewailed her loss so deeply, he probably thought it irrecoverable. Poor Mabel ! her trembling, imploring looks would have silenced any one less devoted to his art than the Signor, but he did not lament Mabel's misfortune so much for herself as for others ; he grieved so fine an instrument should be destroyed, and he did not give a thought to the misery the possessor of that fine organ must feel ; but looking suddenly round, he observed the expression of her countenance, and

tried by consolation to efface the evil his inconsiderate words appeared to have effected. He tried her voice several times, and each time heaved a sigh as he thought of what it had been. But he told her, time might do wonders, her voice might return in even greater beauty than before, that it had been overstrained when young, and now required rest. She must amuse herself, not think about it, not attempt to sing, and when he saw her again he could give a more decided answer, and fix the length of time during which she must allow her voice perfect rest.

Mabel thanked him for this very unsatisfactory reply, which had made her feel more sensible of her misfortune than before; but it was better to know the worst, and she fixed a day the following week for returning to him. He saw her agitation, grieved that he could not raise her hopes, and offered that his daughter should return home with her, as she seemed so ill.

This proposal was thankfully accepted, and the walk restored Mabel to composure.

On entering her room she was surprised to find Mr. Rochfort there. He had been several times to call upon Mr. Edwardes, and as he could learn no tidings of him, or of the fate of his opera there, he had determined to ask Mabel about it, and finding her out he had awaited her return.

"I grieve that my negligence should have given you so much trouble," replied Mabel; "but Madame Delville has been so ill, I could think of nothing but her. I ought to have written to Mrs. Neville to say that I could not undertake the part she desired; but I did not know that Mr. Edwardes had settled that I should do so. I thought you and he had only spoken about it."

"But I trust Madame Delville is not seriously ill," interrupted Mr. Rochfort.

"I hope not, indeed," cried Mabel, in a desponding voice. "I should be far more wretched than I am now, if she were."

"You wretched, whom everybody agrees to call 'the spirit of joy!'" exclaimed her companion.

"Yes, I am so ; but I must struggle against it, and I hope to be soon composed again," continued Mabel, as she was searching about a heap of music for Mr. Rochfort's manuscript. "I must return you these," said she ; "and I lament that I cannot represent Margaret. I like her character so much, and the story is beautiful."

"Do not say so, in that determined voice," observed Mr. Rochfort ; "do not despair. Madame Delville will soon recover, and Mrs. Neville will not care how long she waits, if she can secure your assistance at last."

"It is not her illness which prevents my acting in your opera," said Mabel, in a mournful tone ; "I should be too glad to do it if I could."

"And what prevents you ?"

"I have lost the power—my voice is gone, quite gone ;" cried Mabel, bursting into tears, so much was she enfeebled and depressed by all the anxiety she had undergone.

Mr. Rochfort was too much surprised and

shocked to speak for some moments ; and then he endeavoured to act as comforter.

“ Are you sure, Mademoiselle Delville, are you quite sure it cannot return ? ”

Mabel looked up : she had dashed away her tears ; her countenance though pale was composed ; her voice trembled, but she made an effort to steady it. “ I am perfectly certain it is gone, and, I fear, for ever. I am just returned from consulting Signor Allegretto, and he gave me no hope.”

“ But time may effect wonders : do not despair ; you are so young.”

“ Time ! ” repeated Mabel ; “ it may be too late then. If I ever cared for it, it would have been now when she is so ill, for her —.” She stopped confused ; she felt she was betraying more than she ought to do to a stranger ; but Mr. Rochfort had too much delicacy to notice her half-acknowledgement of pecuniary difficulties, which were, indeed, but too real. She had very little ready money left ; and she began to wonder what she should do, if Mr. Edwardes did not soon return.

After a pause Mr. Rochfort resumed. "Do you feel perfectly satisfied with your medical attendants?"

"They are the best in Florence."

"And your mother still continues very ill?" asked Mr. Rochfort.

"Indeed she does; she scarcely knows me. I have never ventured to leave her before to-day, even to go to Signor Allegretto, for fear she might expire during my absence."

"Do you imagine that you would feel more confidence in an English physician?" inquired Mr. Rochfort again.

"In my own countryman? Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mabel, eagerly.

"I fancied Madame Delville was Swiss," observed Mr. Rochfort.

Mabel blushed: this mystery had been the greatest pain to her; she hated changing her name, it was acting an untruth. "I was born in England," she replied.

Her hesitation did not surprise Mr. Rochfort, for he had fancied, ever since the day he first saw her, that it was impossible she

could be Susanne's daughter ; they were so unlike.

"A friend of mine, an English physician, arrived here yesterday. He is travelling for the health of his daughter ; and, if you like, he shall come to you and give you his opinion on your mother's case."

"Thank you, thank you, thousands of times," cried Mabel, joyfully. "It will make me very happy. I hope he will be able to do her good."

"I am most happy to be of any use or comfort to you," answered Mr. Rochfort, kindly. "And you must allow me to call to-morrow and inquire after her."

"I hope I shall have good news to tell you," said Mabel ; "I am sure I shall have great faith in your friend. Now I must return to her. Good bye."

"One word more," cried Mr. Rochfort. "Where must I direct to your uncle ?"

"I myself do not know," said Mabel, sadly. "He went off suddenly, and never gave me his direction. How I wish he would come back !"

Mr. Rochfort proceeded to Mrs. Neville's to tell her the misfortune which had befallen their young favourite ; and he had the delight of meeting with as much or even more sympathy than he expected, in that warm-hearted woman. She wanted to set off instantly to assist Mabel in attending on Susanne ; but this her husband would not consent to. He said if his Louisa did not think her own life precious enough to keep away from any chance of infection, he considered it so ; and he would first wait to see what the report of Mr. Rochfort's friend was, before he allowed her to run any risk.

"What is her mother like ?" asked Mrs. Neville of her visitor.

"I can scarcely believe she is Mabel's mother, they are so totally different ; and, in her confusion just now, she acknowledged herself to be English," said Mr. Rochfort.

"And Madame Delville is French or Swiss, do you hear that, Henry ?" cried Mrs. Neville, addressing her husband. "There is a mystery about her ; and her extraordinary uncle may be



included in it, for I never saw such a strange man before."

Mr. Rochfort begged her not to tell any one her supposition. "We cannot tell what reason they may have for concealment. It may be a good one, and we should respect it," he added.

"And we *will* respect it, Mr. Rochfort," answered Mrs. Neville. "Remember to let me know Dr. Wilson's report as soon as possible, that if Henry does not again object, I may go to her."

"She will be grateful for your kindness, poor girl; she looks very unhappy, and is very lonely. Mr. Edwardes is away, and she does not know where he is gone, or when to expect him," were Mr. Rochfort's parting words.

Dr. Wilson visited Mabel before evening. She felt instantly that he was a man in whom she could place confidence; and he told her that there was no immediate danger, that there might be if Madame Delville did not begin to recover, but that he hoped to be able to avert it, should it disclose itself. Meanwhile, he begged her to be careful of her own health, and not to

allow herself to be too much cast down, repeating that there was every room for hope.

These last few words were enough for Mabel. She felt very grateful to Mr. Rochfort for naming Susanne's case to his friend, who would not take the fee she offered him, telling her it was a friendly visit, and that he never practised out of his own country.

When Mrs. Neville called on her, which she did early the next day, Mabel felt, indeed, that an unseen hand had raised her up friends when she least expected them, and that it would be wrong to repine at the evils she had to endure, when so many blessings were mingled with them.

Still Susanne's improvement did not keep pace with her sanguine hopes. Dr. Wilson came twice in one day, and tried to persuade her to accept Mrs. Neville's offer of visiting her, and engaging a regular nurse to attend on the invalid.

"Do you think I would desert my kind Susanne?" cried Mabel, in her agitation betraying all that she had succeeded in keeping se-

cret, "when she has so tenderly watched over me, and since my mother's death amply supplied her place."

Mrs. Neville was too honourable to remark on these words; she did not even repeat them to her husband, though she usually told *him* every thing; but she built up in her own brain a little romance, of which Mabel was the heroine. She continued to visit her every day, and her kind and gay words succeeded in making the poor girl more cheerful.

Mr. Rochfort once or twice accompanied her, and on one occasion he came alone, and sat and talked to her for some time; but he always sent every day to learn tidings of Madame Delville.

## CHAPTER II.

If it be love, indeed, tell me how much ?

There 's beggary in the love that may be reckoned.

SHAKESPEARE.

A WEEK had passed away since Mabel's visit to Signor Allegretto ; and the morning of her second appointment had arrived. Susanne lay in the same state : she was not worse. She certainly was not better ; but her appearance was not such as to forbid her tender nurse venturing out. She had not been into the air since she last went to learn her probable fate. Her voice had not returned, and she thought it was best to know the worst she had to expect ; this state of suspense was perfectly intolerable.

She sat for some time watching every change of Madame Delville's countenance, and when she saw her at last in a quiet sleep she hastened

to depart, leaving many injunctions with the servant, that if Doctor Wilson came she was to detain him until her return, and desiring her not to forget to give the draught as soon as the patient awoke. Maria was a steady woman ; Mabel thought she could trust her, and hoping the physician would not go away without her seeing him, she hastened out alone.

At the end of the street she fancied she heard footsteps behind her, and as she stopped at the Signor's house, the person passed it rapidly, but as he did so, looked earnestly in her face, and she recognised the stranger she had seen at Mrs. Neville's the night of the play, and whom she believed to be Cecil Mulgrave.

"Ah, Cecil," thought she, "you would not recognise me now ; that token by which you declared, if my face were ever so changed, you would instantly know me ; that voice is no longer mine ;" and more sad than usual, since his appearance recalled the happiest hours of her life, she entered the room where her future destiny would be decided.

The Signor was very kind, and received her with a joyous countenance, telling her he had no doubt her voice was all right again by this time.

“No, indeed! it has never returned, and I only wish to know if it ever will,” cried Mabel, with great earnestness.

“Do not strain it. Let me hear your natural voice,” said Signor Allegretto. Mabel essayed to follow him as he hummed a tune familiar to her, but her throat no longer obediently waited on her ear. She tried a second, a third time,—impossible.

Trembling, agitated, she leant against the piano-forte, and in a weak, rapid voice she cried, “Tell me the worst! for pity’s sake let me know if it is gone for ever! Will it never, never return, or has it only mocked me with its presence for these few years, and disappeared when I wanted it most?”

The old man was so grieved at the frantic agitation of her manner that he could not instantly speak, but perceiving that his silence only terrified her the more, in a kind tone he replied, “If you give yourself perfect rest for a whole

year, never attempting to sing, trying to forget all about it, to keep your mind in a cheerful state, and yourself in good health, I have no doubt it will return, but certainly not before that time."

Mabel was quite silent. She stood so perfectly still, and looked so pale, that her companion was quite alarmed. She spoke at length in a calm but unnatural voice: "Thank you for telling me the worst; and now may I beg you to recommend me to some of your junior pupils to give music lessons. Promise me you will," she continued, in a more agitated manner; "be kind to me, and may a gracious heaven reward you, for my almost mother is ill—dying, I fear, and I must have money to defray our expenses. I cannot sit by idly and behold her sufferings without endeavouring to relieve them."

The Signor was a father. His daughter was about the age of Mabel, and he thought of the agony she would experience if she lost him. Mabel was in precisely the same situation as she would then be.

"My dear young lady," said he kindly; "I will assist you to the extent of my power. I will procure you pupils; I will do all you wish, and in the event of any thing happening to your poor mother, my house shall be your home till you can find a better, and Agnèse will comfort you as she would wish to be comforted, did a similar misfortune befall her."

"Heaven reward you: heaven bless you for your great kindness," exclaimed Mabel, the tears rushing to her eyes: when at that moment the door opened, and Cecil entered. The surprise was too much for Mabel in her weak state; she turned paler than before; and had not the Signor assisted her to a seat she would have fallen.

"Call my daughter Agnèse," exclaimed the old man to Mr. Mulgrave—for it was indeed he—"she will understand this better than I do."

"The poor, poor girl," cried Agnèse, compassionately, as she supported her in her arms; "you told her too abruptly, my father: I knew how it would be; I wish you would have left it to me."



“Do you think she would have been satisfied to hear it from you, girl?” added the Signor. “Why, she would not have believed it! I am sure I told her very gently, very carefully, and she answered me in a very composed manner, and begged me to get her pupils. No; it was certainly this gentleman’s sudden entrance that startled her. She was not prepared for it.”

“I came from Mr. Mordaunt to ask you to go to him this evening,” said Cecil, examining Mabel’s countenance attentively.

“But, Agnèse, you should allow no one to come to me unannounced. I might be engaged in giving a lesson, and it is very tiresome to be disturbed,” continued her father.

“I owe you many apologies, but as I had only to deliver a message, I thought I should interrupt you but for a moment,” replied Cecil; and he whispered to Agnèse, “Her name, tell me her name!”

“Signorina Delville. She had *such* a voice; it resembled angels’ breathings,” exclaimed Agnèse; “and it is gone, quite gone, for ever, I fear. Poor thing! Is it not sad?”

"Has she a father?" asked Cecil, eagerly.

"None, sir ; a mother, who is dying."

Mr. Mulgrave felt bewildered. Since the night of the play, he had been convinced that that splendid voice which he had heard could belong only to Mabel Gascoigne ; and so firmly was he assured of this, that he had raised the hopes of his mother and sister, and they had urged his returning to Florence, to endeavour to discover her. He had entered that city the evening before, full of hope, and he was proceeding to Mrs. Neville's, to make all inquiries concerning her, when he passed her in the street. He felt then more than ever convinced that this must be the form of girl Mabel would have grown into ; indeed, the features were exactly like hers.

He was proceeding slowly along, when he met Mr. Mordaunt, who informed him whither he was bending his steps, and Cecil, with sudden alacrity, offered to deliver his message for him.

Mr. Mordaunt was surprised at this extraordinary politeness, but he did not hesitate to

accept of it, for he had an appointment in another direction, for which he feared he should be too late ; so he gladly availed himself of his friend's offer, and, after a few hasty words of thanks, they separated. Cecil, meanwhile, returned to the house Mabel had entered, and, inquiring for Signor Allegretto, was shown into the room where he and Mabel were.

The fainting fit lasted but a few moments, and Mabel again roused herself, and thanked Agnès for her kind inquiries. Cecil had withdrawn to the window, and she looked round uneasily, as if she had expected to see some one besides the two who were anxiously bending over her. She could now sit up, and she perceived Mr. Mulgrave.

She again closed her eyes for a moment. How should she act ? In her desolate state, it was such a comfort to behold a friend ; but Mr. Edwardes had bound her, by a promise, to see nothing of the Mulgraves—she was to be dead to them.

Cecil came forward. He hoped Mademoiselle Delville was better. He lamented exceed-

ingly having, as the Signor Allegretto alleged, been the cause of her indisposition, by his sudden appearance.

A slight blush mantled Mabel's pale cheek, at these words ; but she commanded herself so far as to answer with composure, as to a stranger.

The Signor had a lesson to give ; he was obliged to go out.

"I leave you in Agnèse's care," said he to Mabel, "and will inquire after you and your mother this evening." He left the room.

Agnèse thought it very odd that the strange gentleman did not go, too ; but he came again towards them, and asked if he could be of any use, in fetching a doctor, or in getting a carriage for Mademoiselle Delville to return in.

"I do not require a doctor ; it was only a momentary faintness," replied Mabel.

"She will be better soon, if I take off this hot shawl," said Agnèse, proceeding to do so.

"No, no, Agnèse ! I am quite well ; pray do not," cried Mabel ; but her friend, with playful earnestness, attempted to unpin it, and,

as she did so, the button of her sleeve got entangled in a slender chain which hung around Mabel's neck. It was too fine to bear the jerk it received; it broke, and a beautiful little pencil-case fell on the floor.

"Ah, Agnèse! what have you done?" cried Mabel, in distress. "You would not listen to me."

"Oh! I am so unhappy! That very beautiful chain;—can you ever forgive me! I am so awkward," exclaimed Agnèse, while, to her great surprise, Mr. Mulgrave sprang forward, picked up the pencil-case, and, putting it into the young invalid's hand, exclaimed,

"Now, Mabel, you can deceive me no longer. I thought I should know you anywhere. Why did they say you were dead? and why will you desire to estrange yourself from your best friends?"

Agnèse thought this a very interesting scene, and no longer lamented her awkwardness. Her father's voice was heard in the hall.

"Yes, my father, I am coming," she replied, and ran out of the room.

"For whom do you mistake me?" asked Mabel, in Italian, which, indeed, had been used throughout this scene, except in Cecil's last speech, and, for a moment, Mr. Mulgrave thought he might have been deceived; but he rejected that idea as soon as he had formed it.

"I mistake you," said he, with a slight smile, "for Mabel Gascoigne, the friend and playmate of my childhood, for whom my mother and my sister have desired me to search."

Mabel's lip quivered, but, with tolerable composure, she replied,

"And why do you mistake *me* for her?"

"Because of your face, which I have not forgotten, your voice, and, more than all, that pencil-case, which I myself gave you when we parted, and when I promised to go in search of you all over the world, with a drawn sword," continued Cecil, with eagerness, adding, laughingly, "Do you not remember my chivalrous determination?"

Mabel smiled at the remembrance of those words; but she pursued,

"If the young lady is dead, is it not more

probable that she gave me that pencil-case, which you say you bestowed on her, than that I, Mademoiselle Delville, should be suddenly metamorphosed into an English girl?"

For a moment Cecil hesitated; but he looked again in her face; he could not be mistaken; two people could not possess the same uncommon shade of hair, nor two the same splendid eyes.

"Have you ever travelled, Mademoiselle Delville?" asked he suddenly, in an indifferent tone.

"I have, at different periods of my life."

"And when did you return?" continued Cecil.

"Where from?" asked Mabel.

"When did you return to the land of the living?" asked Cecil, gravely.

Mabel was quite unprepared for such a question, and she suddenly exclaimed,—“If I am returned hither, it is not for you, Cecil; I must be still dead to you and to your family. You must forget that you have seen, and, above all, that you forced yourself into my confidence; and you must never betray me.”

"Why must I not?" cried Cecil, impetuously. "To remove you from misery, to live with my family, who have assured you of a home in their house for ever. Why did you ever leave us, I entreat you to tell me? What mother is ill? My old friend Susanne? Why are you wishing to give music lessons—and why were you singing at Mrs. Neville's under a false name? Confide in me, Mabel!—for once trust an old friend; your new ones have not seemingly brought you much happiness."

"Cecil! Cecil! I beseech you to leave me! I dare not tell you any thing; and, if you will prove yourself my friend, you will forget this interview and think of me again as dead."

"That I am determined never to do, Mabel, nor my family either. If I fail, my father will employ some other means of discovering you; particularly now you are not happy: do you think my mother and Emeline could hear of your misery and not attempt to comfort you?"

"They must never hear of it, Cecil! If you are indeed still a friend to me, you will be silent,



when you know it is of the greatest importance to me to be unknown," said Mabel with sudden energy.

"And who is it you still fear so much, Mabel? Your father? Is he living by your exertions?" asked Cecil, indignantly.

"And if he were, would it not be as it ought to be? Who else has a claim upon my assistance?"

"It is either he or that odious stranger whose name you never would tell me. I am convinced he had something to do with your disappearance; I could not endure the sight of him. I remember I said his presence was the herald of approaching woe," remarked Cecil.

"Say nothing against *him*, Cecil, I implore you; if he had anything to do with my leaving Westbrook, he has been a noble and generous friend to me ever since. I consider myself bound to respect his wishes as much or even more than my father's," replied Mabel.

"Then it is *his* wish you should forget me?"

"I did not say so, Cecil," answered Mabel, sadly; "I am to remain unknown to you; and

it is very cruel to try to make me break my promise."

"Your promise, Mabel! Do you consider all promises as equally binding?"

"I hope I do," answered Mabel.

"Then I think I can remind you of one still earlier; one you gave me before you were in his power."

"What is it?" inquired Mabel.

"I think, that when *I* promised to search for you all over the world," continued her companion, "*you* promised to reward my exertions by becoming my wife?"

"That was when we were both children, and in play," said Mabel, in a faltering voice, annoyed at blushing against her wish to do so.

"But, Mabel," pursued Cecil, tenderly, "You consider all promises equally binding?"

"All given since I arrived at years of discretion," interrupted Mabel.

"I have performed my part, by discovering you against your own wish; and you should not be less honourable than I! Promise me, my beloved Mabel, now that I claim the fulfilment

of our engagement, that you will not disappoint me; that you will give me a legal right to protect you; and allow me to remove you far from any troubles, and transport you to my mother and sister, who are anxiously expecting you?"

Mabel's tears rolled slowly down her cheeks. "Cecil, if you only knew the misery you give me by speaking thus, by reminding me of those I have struggled to forget, and of days I have never spoken of since I quitted England, you would not do it," sobbed she.

"I am sorry to distress you, Mabel; but, by reminding you of them, I trust to urge you to return to them: can you not say 'yes,' and if *they* wish to prevent it, *we* will"—

"Cecil!" cried Mabel, in a tone of reproach. "Say no more! Do you think I would marry you against my father's wish, if that is what you allude to? It is very sad,—very dreadful for me,—but circumstances would prevent my father's agreeing to it, I am perfectly certain. He would not like to reveal—to acknowledge—"

"—To my father, the misery he has caused you by disregarding his advice."

“ I did not say so ! But, if he never contradicted the report of my death, it is evident that he did not disapprove of the rumour. I have often been told that when I agreed to leave Westbrook, I promised to be *dead* to you all ; and, though I fear I cannot continue in the career chosen for me, I must find another. We must part, Cecil, and for ever.”

“ No ! Mabel ; impossible ! If he is so utterly selfish and heartless, we will make my father ”—

“ Not a word to your father, Cecil ; I tell you my determination—you shall not marry *an actress*.” She covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

“ An actress, Mabel, and wherefore not, if I choose to do so ? Besides, you are not one.”

“ No, Cecil, for my voice is gone,” cried she, in a tone of utter despair. “ But I was intended for one ; it is the same thing.”

“ Pray do not sacrifice yourself or me to any such thought, Mabel. Have we not known and loved each other from childhood ? and shall any false pride suffice to part us ?”

"We knew each other *in* childhood, Cecil," remarked Mabel, with a faint smile. "Since then we have been strangers."

"But now that we have met, if we find we have the same feelings we had then," urged Cecil—

"Circumstances have changed," sighed Mabel.

"It may be so, but surely love is independent of circumstances. Do you not think so, Mabel?"

"It may live through them; but—"

"Having owned *that*, I am satisfied: and now tell me, dear Mabel, have you ever thought of me since we parted?—am I totally indifferent to you?"

"Indifferent, Cecil! impossible. I have very often loved to think of you and of Emeline."

"Leave Emeline alone," cried Cecil, in a tone which reminded Mabel of his boyish days. "You *have* often thought of *me*: promise me then to consent to be mine when I have overcome all obstacles. I have to seek your father; he will soon be brought round; I think I may assure you of that."

"And tell him that you took advantage of a moment of surprise and of weakness, to make me confess all he desired me to conceal."

Cecil looked blank at these words.

"What is to be done, Mabel?" asked he.

"Forget me, Cecil; think of me as of one you are never likely to see again, and consider this meeting only as a dream. Do not bind yourself or me by any promises; return to your home, and devote yourself to the loved ones who inhabit it; when you meet with one who is worthy to dwell with them, make her your wife; and may her affection shed a lustre over all your life, and may you realize the wishes I shall form for your happiness."

Cecil gazed at her in surprise.

"You do not yet know the secrets of your own heart," continued Mabel. "You are yet too young to decide, to have a choice, and so am I. It would be grievous to bind ourselves in chains from which we could never get free, before we had tried our hearts, and known how they beat at the name of another, and who that other is fated to be. This you cannot yet feel for me,

nor I for you, dear Cecil. We loved each other in childhood as brother and sister; but since then, since our characters have been formed in the school of the world, we have never met. We can know nothing of each other, as we really exist; but only the dream we have formed by fancy, and which we believe to be respectively Mabel and Cecil."

"Do you doubt the reality of my love for you, Mabel?" cried Cecil, distressed.

"No, my dear, dear Cecil, I believe it fond and true, as in our childish days," exclaimed Mabel, affectionately. "And so I trust it may continue, if circumstances permit us to meet again; but it is *affection* such as that which binds you to Emeline, the remembrance of that time when our joys and sorrows were in common, when I was your sister Mabel. It must be something more than this you must feel towards a wife, Cecil; it must be love founded on a long acquaintance with her, after her character is matured, when you feel that your sentiments, your thoughts, your tastes, mutually agree; and that a bright halo surrounds the

memory of your acquaintances, with the splendour of that *dream*, which comes but once in our lives, and to some—never !”

“And all this, Mabel, I can never feel for you?” cried Cecil.

“You might do so, dear Cecil, but you cannot now, for you know nothing of me since I was nine or ten years’ old,” answered Mabel.

Notwithstanding his vexation, poor Cecil could not suppress a smile.

“Then it is a bride of ten years’ old I am wooing under your form, Mabel?”

“Exactly so, dear Cecil, and that is not *quite* the bride your parents expect you to take home to them,” continued Mabel, kindly ; “you must think of me as of a still absent sister, who is deeply interested in your welfare, and who hopes fate may not always divide her from her brother.” She held out her hand to him as she spoke. Cecil took it and kissed it.

“I must submit to your will, Mabel ; but it is a sad death-blow to my hopes ; you are not, certainly, romantic?”

“I fear I am too much so. Nothing would



induce me to marry, unless to one for whom I felt the deepest reverence and esteem; one whom I could respect—to whom I could look up as to the wisest as well as the dearest of earthly friends; to whose guidance I would implicitly trust myself; who would be to me a second, a dearer father; and for whom I should feel no sacrifice too great—no devotion too sublime.

“These are feelings, dear Cecil, which are not the growth of a moment: they are built on a rock which will brave all the storms of life: they cannot be felt for one who has had no more experience than myself, and it may never be my fate to be acquainted with them; but, if they are *love*, it is love different to what we hear of. It is not the delusion of youth, it is the affection of later years, based on all the higher and nobler sentiments of our nature; it is friendship in its more exalted state; friendship without its troubles, purified of all that may interfere to destroy it; two of one heart and one mind, existing through the present as the future!”

“And may you live to experience it, my be-

loved Mabel ; may you be happy as you deserve to be," cried Cecil, enthusiastically : " you have convinced me I must be content to look elsewhere for a wife, and rest satisfied with another sister in you."

" Farewell, Cecil ; my good wishes attend you ; your happiness will be ever dear to me ! Do not reveal my existence to your family ; I am grateful for all their kindness ; but circumstances forbid my accepting it. I trust we may all meet again in happier times."

" Shall I not accompany you home, Mabel ? You are not well enough to go alone."

" No, thank you, dear Cecil ; Agnès would be disappointed : she expects to have our usual walk."

Cecil again wished Mabel good-bye ; and sad at the total destruction of his boyish hopes, though he could not but acknowledge the justice of Mabel's remarks, he slowly continued his walk to Mrs. Neville's, to hear all that she had to say of the young actress, and to carry her report back to his family.

Poor Cecil ! It is a bitter moment when a

long cherished dream is found to be impracticable ; but from such moments it is that much wisdom—much that promotes the happiness of our future lives often springs. Far better to bear the disappointment of a dream, however prolonged and precious, than by building on an unstable foundation, doom one's self and another to all the misery which arises from the union of uncongenial tastes and sentiments.

## CHAPTER III.

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN spring had arrived, Lord Eastland returned to England ; and after an interview with his prime counsellors, Mrs. Mulgrave and Georgina, it was agreed that Flora should be taken to the next drawing-room.

She received this command in silence, but she shed over it many bitter tears when she found herself alone. She shrank from appearing where her want of beauty would call forth many unpleasant remarks. If her father and Mrs. Ridley felt ashamed of her at home, would they not feel much more so, when she, awkward, timid, and ignorant, was suddenly placed among the beautiful and the accomplished to act her part in life? She, who was so sensitively alive to any remarks

on her many defects; she who had so fearful a dread of appearing foolish and inelegant — but how could she be otherwise than the latter, unaccustomed as she was to the society of the refined? She submitted to her fate, as to a painful martyrdom that awaited her. As she could not escape from it, she would endeavour to bear it with resignation.

But painful as it appeared to her, it was scarcely less so to Lord Eastland. He was proud: he attached great importance to external appearance, and was keenly sensitive to ridicule. Those whom his contempt or his remarks had wounded, would now be able to avenge themselves, and fully.

It was a bitter disappointment to a man like him to have a daughter whose appearance he conceived was essentially vulgar: his only child — one on whom no glance of admiration could rest; he who admired accomplishments and refinement could not boast of them in her; and he who was so particular about every slight point of etiquette, would every moment find them all transgressed by her.

It was a deep-settled annoyance from which he could not get free, a thorn which embittered every moment of his life: he who had been so severe on others was now doomed to suffer himself.

He did not reflect that, by a strange caprice of nature, we sometimes meet with refinement in the lower walks of life, while to those who might consider it as their birthright, it is often unknown.

He felt angry with the innocent victim, that she had not that which he desired; he never stopped to consider that the absence of beauty might be as great a source of regret to herself as to him. He forgot that other defects are pitied, and that delicacy of feeling forbids remarks on any personal misfortune; why should not the same indulgence be extended to the defect of ugliness? It is as often, perhaps even more frequently, lamented than any other misfortune, and it is cruelty to open the eyes of the sufferers—to teach them to see themselves as others do. Why not allow them to preserve their delusion?—it is a harmless one!

The consciousness of vulgarity, when it has been enforced by others, sometimes, out of a spirit of obstinacy, increases it; and nothing can be so mortifying as that a mind formed to appreciate and admire the delicate and the beautiful, should have to shrink from all that can wound the most fastidious eye, the most refined taste, and to feel that in yourself is concentrated all you most dislike. The constant dread of calling attention to your defects makes you, perhaps, even more awkward; and the ever-present depression, the fear, the painful consciousness of being unloved, embitters every feeling, obliterates every impulse of talent, deadens and stupifies every joyous thought, and makes you what you are said to be. Of all trials which await us in this life, I believe this to be the most acute; for it is constant and enduring,—a martyrdom which never ceases.

Full of these and similar thoughts, poor Flora awaited the hour that was to introduce her to the scenes of active life. She had once longed not to be considered as a child, but now

she lamented her advanced age, since she could no longer exist unknown.

The Marchioness of Clifton, an old lady, some distant relation of her mother's, was solicited by Lord Eastland to present his daughter to the sovereign. She joyfully accepted, but said she had never seen Flora, and desired to make her acquaintance ; so her young *protégée* was sent for.

As the poor girl entered the room, she instinctively felt that she did not possess the form or face the old lady would desire to belong to her relation. A shade of disappointment was visible on the countenance of the Marchioness ; and, although she conversed with Flora about her dress, it was not in the manner of one much interested in it.

The day was at hand, when Lord Eastland entered the school-room with an open note.

"How capricious and troublesome women sometimes are !" he exclaimed ; "one can never depend upon them."

Mrs. Ridley took the note from his hand and read it aloud.



“ Lady Clifton regretted that, her health not being very good, she was obliged to leave town earlier than usual on account of it. She was very unhappy at being forced to plead her inability to comply with Lord Eastland’s desire, but she hoped her dearest Flora would obtain another *chaperon* for the drawing-room.”

“ What do you think of that ? ” asked Lord Eastland.

“ It is the way of the world,” said Mrs. Ridley, in a sapient tone, looking full of contempt for the whole affair.

“ I am sorry Lady Clifton is ill, papa,” observed Flora, timidly ; but a bitter thought rushed into her mind, — Lady Clifton was ashamed of her appearance, and would have nothing to do with her.

“ Is that all you have to say on the subject, you innocent creature ! ” exclaimed Lord Eastland, with a gesture of contempt. “ Not well, when she is never at home till three o’clock ! Not well, indeed ! — mere caprice ! It shews only what dependence is to be placed on your friends.”

"Wait till next year," suggested Flora, forgetting her timidity in her earnest desire to escape.

"Wait till next year!" repeated her father. "After the trouble of bringing you to London? I must ask Mrs. Mulgrave."

"I am certain she will have great pleasure in doing it," observed Mrs. Ridley.

"Yes; I think she will," answered Lord Eastland; "if it be only to prove to her dear friend, Lady Clifton, how much more obliging *she* is. And, besides, Georgina will persuade her to undergo the trouble for your sake. Flora, Georgina is a true friend to you and a very nice girl: you cannot do better than endeavour to imitate her."

Flora felt she must be very ungrateful to her *true friend*, for she could not like her; there was something in Georgina very disagreeable even in her kindest moments.

Flora did not know that it was the natural horror of anything untrue or deceitful, which enables the young at once to dislike those in whom it is found.

Lord Eastland proceeded to Mrs. Mulgrave, to make his request. He found only Georgina at home. She had been up late the night before, and was going out again that night, and, "Mamma thought she looked tired and pale, and had insisted on her remaining on the sofa instead of accompanying her in her drive."

"Your mamma is quite right to be careful of you, Georgina! Young people are very imprudent, and think so little of their good looks," replied Lord Eastland.

"You are not going to scold me for that," exclaimed Georgina, laughing. "I remember when I was rather younger, always being told that it did not signify how I looked, if I was good."

"Ah! the logic of the nursery! How it is soon forgotten and disproved in after-life," answered Lord Eastland.

"Was it not the wisest—the safest creed?" asked Georgina. "I am getting old enough to see the world as it really is: I envy Flora her fresh and young feelings."

"She looks resigned and patient as a martyr,

and certainly does not consider herself at all an enviable personage."

"But *we* know that will soon disappear; the world is very fascinating for a while, even if we afterwards sigh for the charms of domestic life," observed Georgina.

"Are you beginning to do that?" asked Lord Eastland. "I should think, of all people, you had least cause to be dissatisfied."

"I am unreasonable, perhaps," added Georgina, smiling.

Lord Eastland now inquired if they were going to the drawing-room, and detailed the history of Lady Clifton's treachery, as he called it.

Georgina hastened to assure him that, "Mamma would be enchanted—that, had they not intended going, they would certainly have done it in such a case;" and Lord Eastland left her, firmly convinced that Georgina Mulgrave was the nicest girl he knew, and lamenting he did not possess such a daughter.

Mrs. Mulgrave called to fetch Flora on the following day, that they might choose her dress; and a terrible long ceremony it was. Georgina

was flying about the room, peeping at everything, and continually calling off her mamma's attention to look at a "lovely little bonnet," or a "pretty cloak," which she was "half tempted to be extravagant enough to give herself;" and the consequence was, Mrs. Mulgrave's purchasing her several things she admired. Mrs. Ridley objected to everything, on the score of being too expensive. "She thought it very ridiculous to waste so much money in gratifying vanity."

Mrs. Mulgrave looked at every shade of silk and satin, wondering which would suit Flora's complexion best, and lamenting she had a girl to dress who would not set off her taste to the best advantage; while poor Flora, being bewildered at the variety of silks, continually mistaking one for the other, and full of astonishment at the time Mrs. Mulgrave was choosing a dress, had to be told by Georgina, "that she had no taste. She had better leave it all to mamma;" by Mrs. Ridley, "that she was thinking far too much about a thing of no consequence after all;" and by Mrs. Mulgrave,

“to make up her mind which she would have, and not stand debating all day.”

They returned home at last, Mrs. Mulgrave having spent at least an hour in choosing the trimming, which appeared to Flora's unformed taste very hideous indeed.

The morning arrived ; and Mrs. Ridley had managed so awkwardly that the hair-dresser came at ten o'clock, and Flora was told twenty times during the next two hours by her governess, “That she was ashamed to see her so vain of her fine things, as to be continually looking in the glass ;” while poor Flora's hurried glances were really those of despair and of shame at being so strangely attired in the “broad daylight.”

She felt that everybody who saw her must laugh at her, and her mirror did not certainly reveal *to her* a very beautiful sight.

She trembled when she thought of the fate that awaited her. The day was bitterly cold and rainy, and Flora was particularly susceptible of cold.

Mrs. Mulgrave arrived, and hastened upstairs

to look at Flora. She examined her hair, the minutiae of her dress, then, desiring her to walk to the end of the room, she looked at her attentively through her eyeglass, and exclaimed, with a half sigh,

“You really *do* look tolerably, my dear.”

“She never expected I should even be *tolerable*,” thought Flora. “What a misfortune it is to be ugly: if I might hope (as in the days of the good fairies) to have any wish gratified, it would certainly be for *beauty*; nothing else is of so much consequence, certainly.”

In driving down Bond-street, Mrs. Mulgrave’s carriage overtook that of Lady Clifton’s, and she drew up close to her.

“Well, my dear Lady Clifton,” she exclaimed, “I am delighted to see you here. I thought you had left London, on account of your health.”

“I am going to my daughter’s at Richmond; I think change of air will do me good,” replied her friend. “What makes you go to this drawing-room? I thought you fancied the first always too crowded.”

"So I do generally ; but Lord Eastland wished me to present his daughter, and a young lady never objects to the first drawing-room ; it makes the season longer," said Mrs. Mulgrave.

"I wish people would let others have a taste of their own," thought Flora ; "how I hate to hear that *young ladies* like this or dislike that, as if they were a set of automatons, all moved by the same wire."

"Is his daughter with you ?" asked Lady Clifton, advancing her head. "How do you do, my dear ? I hope you are not frightened ? I am so sorry I could not stay in town to-day ; I thought your father would have waited till next time. Remember me to him, and say how it grieves me to have been unable to present you ;" and, after a few words to Mrs. Mulgrave, she drove on.

"It is quite evident, now," thought Flora, "that she did not wish to see me with her, for she could surely have put off going to Richmond till to-morrow."

Georgina had declined the fatigue of accom-



panying her mother, so Mrs. Mulgrave and Flora were alone. They found the rooms very crowded, and Mrs. Mulgrave was very anxious to get home again. How Flora passed the Queen she never knew. She had a sort of faint remembrance of some one saying to her, "Do not go on so fast," as she was rapidly pursuing Mrs. Mulgrave, and of an idea rushing into her head that it was the proper moment to make her curtsy, but she could recollect nothing further, until she found herself waiting in the gallery, with Mrs. Mulgrave, for the carriage. By degrees she had sufficiently recovered from her fright and stupor to observe the different dresses of the ladies who were continually passing, and to perceive that Mrs. Mulgrave spoke or bowed to almost every one, when her eye rested on the countenance of a girl, apparently younger than herself, who looked very ill and seemed much tired.

"You were very foolish to come, dear Emeline; it is too much fatigue for you," she heard in a voice she too well knew.

"That, then, is Emeline Mulgrave," thought

she. "Are they married? I have never heard of it; but then I never hear anything, and I do not like to ask Georgina about him."

Flora trembled, and tried to stand in the recess of a window, out of the way.

"I never go anywhere without seeing Mr. Campbell," thought she. "Why is he more to me than any other person? why does his sight affect me painfully? Oh! how absurd, how foolish, how inconvenient, to escape the evils of a disagreeable present, by dwelling in an imaginative future! I wish I could recall the idle hours I have passed in dreaming, and attach my thoughts to nothing but sober reality."

Emeline here perceived her aunt, and approached her; and Mr. Campbell recognized Flora, and shook hands with her.

"You must let me introduce you to my future bride," said he: "you know her mother and brother, already; but she was not at Mrs. Waldegrave's, I remember. Emeline," continued he, "Lady Flora Bathurst is anxious to become acquainted with you; I am ashamed

to say how many years she has known me ; it would make us both appear so old."

Flora fixed her eyes on Emeline's face. It was very small, but her eyes were large and brilliant, and her figure was so slight and so very *petite*, that she looked like a child of twelve years old.

Lady Beverstone, who had been standing at some distance, now approached, and spoke very kindly to Flora, saying, she was glad Emeline and she had at last made acquaintance.

Emeline sat down on a sofa; Mr. Campbell and Flora remained standing near her, and Lady Beverstone and her sister-in-law were conversing at a little distance.

"Is this your first appearance in the world?" asked Emeline, with what Flora thought a beautiful smile.

"Yes," was the reply.

"And almost mine," continued Emeline. "Did you think it very formidable?"

"I cannot say I like it at all," answered Flora.

"Nor I," cried Emeline. "I never intend to come again ; it is so fatiguing."

"You know that I tried to prevent you to-day," said Mr. Campbell. "I was sure you would not be strong enough to bear it."

"But *you* would persuade me to be too careful of myself, Francis," exclaimed Emeline.

"Not too careful, Emeline. Remember your life is precious to so many, and learn to prize it, and consider it worth while to be very careful indeed."

As Mr. Campbell said these words he fixed on Emeline an affectionate look, as if to say, "precious as she was to so many, she was doubly precious to him."

Flora was enchanted to hear Mrs. Mulgrave's carriage announced, and they hastened away. "She seems a charming girl, and he appeared very fond of her," thought she; "I hope they may both be happy," and she sighed.

"Why do you sigh, Flora, now it is all over?" asked Mrs. Mulgrave.

Flora only sighed again, but did not answer.

"What do you think of my little niece Emeline?" inquired Mrs. Mulgrave.

"I think her very pretty, and she seems ami-

able and affectionate," replied Flora. "Is she married to that gentleman?"

"Not yet; they have been engaged some time, but her father considered her too young, and it was agreed they should wait a year. She is very delicate."

"Yes! she looked very tired and very ill to-day."

"I have always feared that she is doomed to an early death; and every time I see her only increases my alarm. I cannot think she has long to live," observed Mrs. Mulgrave.

"Poor girl," cried Flora, with a start of horror; and "poor, poor Mr. Campbell," thought she, "what a blow for him; he seems so fond of her."

"They were at Naples all last winter," continued Mrs. Mulgrave; "and since then she is decidedly stronger."

Here they arrived at Lord Eastland's, and Mrs. Ridley proceeded to question Flora about the manner in which Mrs. Mulgrave had pronounced her to have acquitted herself of her arduous duty.

Flora replied, "Mrs. Mulgrave had said nothing about it."

"Then I fear you must have done something she could not praise ; and your dress—did any one admire it ?"

"Nobody noticed it."

"Then, my dear, I hope you perceive the folly of wasting so much time and thought upon it. Nobody was likely to remark what you had on."

"I wish I could always be thus unnoticed," thought Flora. "If I had only an invisible cap at times, and could transport myself far, far away from every one, till they had quite forgotten my existence."

"Whom did you see ?" asked Mrs. Ridley again, intent upon discovering all the news.

"I saw Lady Beverstone's daughter, who is going to marry Mr. Campbell ; he was there too. He seems so fond of her !"

"And very natural he should, Lady Flora, if he is going to marry her. If he did not like her, why should he propose to make her his wife ?"

Flora thought Mrs. Ridley's voice had never sounded so disagreeably before. "I wish any single person in the world liked me," sighed she.

"What can put such nonsense into your head, Lady Flora? Do you suppose your father and I do not like you, or why should we be at the trouble of giving you advice, as we so frequently do?"

"Ah, not such liking as that!" cried Flora. "I mean, like me for myself, good or bad, beautiful or hideous as that self may be; who would speak kindly and look kindly, and persuade and advise gently; but never look as if they hated me, were ashamed of me, or despised me."

"Lady Flora," cried Mrs. Ridley, horrified, "I must entreat you to be silent. You must not talk at random in this manner. I fear you are losing your senses. It is very wrong, as well as very absurd! Who hates or despises you?"

"Everybody!" exclaimed Flora, bursting into tears.

"Certainly," observed Mrs. Ridley, with a

very grave and dignified look, "certainly, the world has a bad effect on all who venture into it. This scene would not have happened yesterday. What can have given rise to this extraordinary delusion?"

Forced to think of and find a reason for her depressed spirits, Flora at last settled that it must be Lady Clifton's conduct, and she detailed the account of their meeting her.

"See how much dependence can be placed on a woman of the world," was the answer Flora received. "It will be a warning to you not to be too fascinated by its many attractions."

"*I* am not the least likely to grow too fond of the world, so there is no necessity for your warning," cried Flora. "It will never receive me in a manner kind enough to make me like it."

"Wait till you know it better, before you are so certain," observed her governess.

"I am not beautiful, far from it, so there is nothing in me to please its eye; nor can I sing to charm its ear. I have neither wit nor talent to amuse it. Depend upon it, Mrs. Ridley, I



shall never be a favorite there, any more than I am at home."

Mrs. Ridley listened to this passionate speech of her pupil's with the greatest calmness ; and, after thinking for a few moments, exclaimed with a solemn countenance, and with an accent of the most perfect conviction,

" I agree with you, my dear ; I see it all clearly now ; you will never be a favorite with any one !"

Flora rushed out of the room, and banged the door after her.

## CHAPTER IV.

———The untainted virtue of your years  
Hath not yet dived into the world's deceit.

SHAKESPEARE.

A FEW days after the drawing-room it was agreed that Flora should accompany Mrs. Mulgrave to a ball, which Lady Clifton had come back from Richmond expressly to give, in honour of a granddaughter who had been presented at the same time as Flora.

She was proceeding to join Mrs. Mulgrave at her own house, and, strange to say, Mrs. Ridley had trusted her alone in the carriage, when, on turning the corner of a street, she was terrified by a sudden shock, and she sat trembling and wondering what it could be, as the carriage no longer moved, although she heard the horses' feet trampling on the stones. She pulled the check-string, but no notice was taken of it, and

in a few moments the carriage was surrounded by a great crowd.

Flora tried to squeeze herself up in a corner, hoping to escape observation, and in an agony of terror. What could have happened? The carriage was surely not upset, for she was sitting upright as before; the wheel could not even be off, for the seat was perfectly level; had they run over any one? If they had, she must have heard screams.

She was debating what she should do; she dreaded putting her head out of the window to inquire, for she did not desire to meet the observation of the mob, which increased every instant.

While she was still thinking of it the glass was let down, and a man put his head in at the window, asking—

“Would the ladies like to get out?”

“No! I am alone,” cried Flora; “what is the matter?”

“Your horses have fallen, madam, and they must cut the traces to get them up.”

“Is there any danger?” cried Flora.

"I cannot answer for it," replied the man. "There may be ; at all events it is safer to get out."

"Oh, may I not remain within the carriage?" exclaimed Flora, in an accent of terror.

"It will be attended with great danger if you do, madam ;" and he opened the door.

Flora was too bewildered to think, and she sprang out. She was in the middle of Piccadilly : all the shops were shut, she looked round, it was unusually quiet, nobody seemed walking about ; when, at that moment, she heard a carriage coming, and fearful of being run over if she stopped in the middle of the street, she made a desperate effort and rushed across, when she perceived a chemist's shop open, and ran into it, without considering what she did, exclaiming,—

"May I remain here ? the horses have fallen down ?"

On this sudden apparition two men who were in the shop looked up bewildered ; but they very civilly proposed to her to come to the further end, for a crowd had now gathered

round the door, consisting of a multitude of little boys and girls and women intent on observing the lady so smartly dressed.

Poor Flora had never been so frightened in her life, when she perceived the crowd divide, and a tall gentleman walked into the shop, saying, "Can I be of any assistance?" but the next instant he held out his hand to the terrified girl, exclaiming, "Lady Flora! Is it you who are flying about the streets in this manner by night? What would Mrs. Ridley say to it?"

"Pray do not tell her," cried the trembling Flora; "I could not help it! I did not know what I did;—I was so frightened!"

The shopmen looked at each other, and smiled; but Mr. Campbell replied, "I am very glad you are not hurt: the wood pavement is so dangerous, and I hope you are not much frightened."

"Oh, no, not now," cried Flora; "I am so glad to see you," and she blushed deeply, fearing she was saying too much, for she felt she was always more glad to see him than anybody else.

“ Would the lady like some sal volatile after her fright ?” inquired the shopman.

“ Oh, no,” exclaimed Flora, astonished.

“ Mrs. Ridley does not patronise it ?” asked Mr. Campbell ; “ She does not understand nervousness !”

Flora smiled, but still she felt rather annoyed that he could not talk to her of any thing but Mrs. Ridley.

“ Where were you going ?” again asked Mr. Campbell.

“ To Mrs. Mulgrave’s ; she was to take me to a ball.”

“ Mrs. Mulgrave’s !” repeated Mr. Campbell ; “ that is a long way off. I will go and see what has happened to the carriage, and then I think you had better let me take you to Lady Beverstone’s ; she lives only two doors from this, in Bolton-street ; and we will send a message to Mrs. Mulgrave to call for you.”

“ Oh, thank you,” exclaimed Flora, gratefully. “ If Mrs. Mulgrave will not be angry, I should like that.”

“Angry ; nonsense ! she cannot be angry,” said Mr. Campbell, as he left the shop.

He soon returned : one of the horses was hurt, and the harness too much broken to be used again that night. The coachman and footman had been so much engaged in attending to the horses, which were very spirited animals, that they had only that moment discovered the absence of Lady Flora ; and Mr. Campbell made her laugh, by an amusing account of their consternation when they peeped into the carriage and found her gone.

“Will you come to Lady Beverstone’s now ?” he continued.

“Walk without a bonnet !” exclaimed Flora, amazed.

“Could you put a bonnet on the top of that wreath ?” asked her companion. “Come ; it is not two minutes’ walk.

Flora accompanied him, too much bewildered by her extraordinary adventure to talk ; and on reaching Lord Beverstone’s, the servant appeared much surprised to see a lady with Mr. Campbell. “What name

shall I say?" he began to inquire, out of curiosity.

"Don't you know *me*, Wilson?" cried Mr. Campbell, and passing him, hastened up stairs. As he opened the door of the drawing-room, Flora heard Emeline exclaim, "How late you are, Francis! We have been expecting you a long time," when, perceiving Flora, although she marvelled to see her there, she hastened to meet her, and spoke to her in an amiable manner.

"Does not Lady Flora's sudden appearance alarm you, Emeline?" asked Mr. Campbell.

"Not, since I see her well," answered Emeline; "I hope that you have met with no accident, Lady Flora."

"My horses fell down," said Flora.

"And were you not very much frightened? I am sure I should have been so. Are you at all hurt? How fortunate Francis was there, and that we lived so near."

"I want Lady Beverstone to send to Mrs. Mulgrave's to say Lady Flora is here, and to ask her to come for her," said Mr. Campbell.



"Oh, certainly," exclaimed Emeline; "I will write to my aunt," and she began to do so.

"You are very kind to take so much trouble about me," said Flora.

"I am too happy to do it," replied Emeline. "This is quite an adventure in my quiet life. I hope now you have once found your way here you will often come, until we get very intimate."

"Lady Beverstone entered the room, and spoke very affectionately to Flora, sympathizing with her fright, and expressing her delight that she had sought refuge in her house.

Cecil Mulgrave arrived soon after, and his appearance seemed to freeze poor Flora again: she thought she did not like him, for she imagined he had spoken to her out of compassion at Mrs. Waldegrave's dinner, and she fancied, besides, that he esteemed his great wealth and position, as a peer's eldest son, too highly, and she wished not to be among the number of those who were anxious to make his acquaintance. She did not desire to assist in flattering him, and whatever other reasons there

might have been it is perhaps difficult to learn, but it was quite certain that there subsisted between Flora and Cecil a painful constraint. They never sought each other's society from choice—they appeared to have an intuitive dislike to each other.

Flora consequently sat very silent, answering occasionally when Lady Beverstone or Emeline spoke to her.

She looked upon that happy family party, all collected round the table where Emeline was making tea; and she contrasted it with *her* evenings—Mrs. Ridley knitting or reading some book, over which she fell asleep, and herself, perhaps, writing an exercise, or tormenting herself to learn the intricacies of an irregular Italian verb.

She observed Emeline and Mr. Campbell. She thought how blessed that young girl's life would be passed with him; and she murmured, perhaps, at joy and sorrow being so unequally divided in this life, until she noticed Emeline's emaciated form and heavy eye, and remembered she had been a sufferer from childhood. She

exerted herself to think of her as Mrs. Campbell, to rejoice that he had so amiable a bride ; and, as she gazed, a tear dimmed her eye ; it was the last, suggested by a hope now totally extinguished. All probability, all reality, had left it ; she was glad it was so, her brief dream of joy had been the source of countless misery ; and she felt happier now it was relinquished for ever, which it had not been until this evening. Her grave and anxious looks had just attracted Lady Beverstone's attention, when Georgina and Mrs. Mulgrave entered the room. " Well, Flora," said the latter, " we must go instantly ; it is very late."

" You are a wonderful girl, to meet with such an adventure," exclaimed Georgina ; " only," she added, with a rather malicious smile, " it is rather unfortunate that the chivalrous gentleman who came to your assistance is a married man, and not a gay young knight."

Flora blushed and looked confused, as Georgina intended she should ; but Cecil instantly exclaimed, " Who was it who brought Lady

Flora here; where has he vanished? What a pity he did not wait to hear Georgina's speech!"

"Were *you* not here at the adventure, Cecil? Have you not heard about it? for the hero of to-night is standing by you now; ask him to tell you all particulars."

"I admire the accuracy of my cousin's usual conversation," answered Cecil, "if she calls my friend Campbell a married man."

"Well, engaged or married, it is all the same thing."

"If all your definitions are equally correct, Georgina, I shall know how much to believe of what you say in future," continued Cecil.

"Cecil, you always were a great tease!" said Georgina. "Once I was foolish enough to mind it; but I do not now."

"Do not go on talking, Georgina, we shall never arrive if you do," observed her mother, leaving the room.

Flora and Georgina followed her instantly, and Georgina told her companion she would find it very stupid at Lady Clifton's, as the

house was bad ; but, when Flora entered it, she was enchanted with its brilliant appearance.

The heroine of the night, Isabel Stuart, appeared to Flora to be very much envied ; she was not pretty, but everybody was making up to her ; she was continually dancing, and looked full of spirits.

“What a fortunate girl ; how different to poor insignificant me,” thought Flora, as she attempted to push her way through the crowd after Mrs. Mulgrave. She marvelled at their numberless acquaintances, and was astonished that they could remember the names of all, and find something to say to each.

“There is Mr. Rochfort out there,” whispered Georgina. “Do not you remember how you flirted with him at Mrs. Waldegrave’s ?”

Flora could not imagine what Georgina meant by *flirting* ; but she discovered so far, that it was intended as a reproach to her, that it was something she ought not to have done ; and she began to reflect on every word that had passed between them, and to feel even more

ashamed of that unfortunate evening than before.

They had now traversed the whole length of the ball-room ; and Mrs. Mulgrave said to her daughter, " I think I shall go into Lady Clifton's own little room, which is beyond this. It will be cooler, and I can secure a comfortable arm-chair."

" Oh, mamma ! how tiresome ; when I want to talk to the Harcourts. There they are by the door."

" Well then, Georgina, you had better stand by them, as you do not like sitting down, and you are sure to be engaged every dance, and it would be difficult to reach me every time."

Georgina was charmed ; she dexterously threaded her way through the crowd, and established herself in her favourite place, a doorway ; but, once there, she entirely forgot all her important business with the Miss Harcourts, in seizing on every gentleman who passed, making him talk to her, whether he wished it or not ; and interrupting her conversation to shake hands with, or bow to some one else.

Georgina was never idle in a ball-room; never allowed any one to pass without speaking to her; danced, talked, laughed, and flirted incessantly for three hours every evening, sometimes even longer.

Flora, meanwhile, timidly followed Mrs. Mulgrave, who said to her, as she placed herself by a lady she knew, "there is a nice place for you in that corner, Flora; you had better sit down while you can, for you are not as much accustomed to standing as Georgina, and it would fatigue you too much."

And there Flora remained for the next three hours, until her head ached with the incessant talking and the loud music, and her eyes with the blaze of the lights. But worse than all was the sensation of isolation she experienced; the only one among three hundred people who was unnoticed and uncared for.

Occasionally, between the groups who filled this little room, Flora could see into the other; but generally she perceived nothing at all, for her seat was low, and people were standing up close to her. She could not see on account of

them; but once or twice she caught sight of Georgina waltzing, and once she saw Mr. Rochfort speaking to her. She heard a clock which stood on a table close to her, strike twelve, one, and two, when Mrs. Mulgrave suddenly turned round.

“My dear! I had entirely forgotten you, you are so quiet; this is rather dull work for you, not dancing; Georgina is so passionately fond of it, she never sits down all the evening. Poor little patient creature! you have had time to compose a poem in praise of the ball.”

“I wish I could,” answered Flora, coolly, “it would be some amusement.”

“I would shew you all the rooms, and we would go and get some supper,” pursued Mrs. Mulgrave, “but I am so afraid of losing my seat.”

“Pray do not go for me, I prefer remaining here,” said Flora; and Mrs. Mulgrave, satisfied with this answer, resumed her former conversation.

Half-an-hour later Flora perceived Mr. Rochfort entering the room; she had a sort of faint



hope that he would ask her to dance; and though she did not much like him, and though Georgina's speech about him had amazed her, it would be more agreeable than remaining any longer in that stupid corner.

Mr. Rochfort had great difficulty in making his way to Mrs. Mulgrave, so inaccessible was the position she occupied, but after a great deal of trouble he succeeded. "I hear Lady Flora is with you to night; can you tell me where to find her?" he asked.

"*There* you are," cried he, in an accent of the greatest astonishment. "Did not Mrs. Mulgrave tell you how very absurd it is to place yourself where nobody can possibly see you; she instructed her daughter better than that. She should give you lessons what to do in a ball-room, and the like; nobody understands such things better than Miss Mulgrave."

"Oh, Georgina is so devoted to dancing, she never sits down," exclaimed Mrs Mulgrave; "but Flora is not accustomed to standing yet."

Mr. Rochfort now asked Flora to dance with

him, and she joyfully accepted, feeling grateful for his kindness in searching for her and not forgetting her, as everybody else had done.

He was very agreeable, very good-natured; not the least teasing, as he had been at Mrs. Waldegrave's; and Flora discovered him to be very clever and very amusing.

When the dance was over he insisted on getting her some tea, and then shewing her the house. He asked her if she would not like to speak to Lady Harcourt, with whom she had been slightly acquainted at Florence? and Lady Harcourt instantly introduced Flora to her son, and her nephew. The son asked her to dance, a quadrille was just beginning, and she joined in it; her spirits rose with this fortunate change in her circumstances, and she was talking eagerly to her new acquaintance, when somebody touched her arm. She turned and perceived Mrs. Mulgrave.

“Remember,” said she, in a low voice, “that you always come back to me the moment you have finished dancing. It is a thing I am very particular about.”

"And yet never see your own daughter once throughout the evening!" thought Flora.

"What have you been doing all this long time, Flora?" asked Mrs. Mulgrave again.

"Mr. Rochfort shewed me the house, and I went to supper."

The music ceased. "Come, my dear, we must go home: it is very late."

"But I am engaged to dance," said Flora.

"I am very sorry for it, but it is three o'clock," answered Mrs. Mulgrave. "To whom are you engaged?"

"Mr. Mordaunt."

"Mr. Mordaunt will recover the disappointment," said Mrs. Mulgrave, coolly; "and I must go home: these late hours will be the death of me."

"Where is Georgina?" asked Flora, as they were going down stairs.

"She has so many engagements that she did not want to leave yet, and Mrs. Seymour promised to bring her home."

Flora did not reply, but silently followed her conductress to the carriage. The more she

knew of the world the less she saw to admire in it. She never could have believed either Mrs. Mulgrave or Georgina to be such despicable characters as she had found them to be from the experience of this one night.

## CHAPTER V.

Haply, this life is best.

SHAKSPEARE.

ON the following day Lady Beverstone and Emeline visited Flora, and took her out for a drive.

Emeline was very anxious to hear all about the ball, — whom Flora danced with, what Georgina did, and so on; and after a little time Flora felt so intimate with them, that she did not hesitate to tell them everything, and even her own opinion of Mrs. Mulgrave's and Georgina's conduct. There are some people whom you feel you can trust at once, with whom you can have no reserve, and the amiable Lady Beverstone, and the simple and gentle Emeline, were two of them.

Emboldened by their kindness, Flora ven-

tured to ask what flirting was, and what Georgina meant when she accused her of it?

Both Lady Beverstone and her daughter laughed at the solemn manner in which Flora put this question, and Lady Beverstone hastened to reply.

"It is a word most frequently used without a meaning—a cant word."

"But Georgina meant more than that, by the expression of her countenance," cried Flora; "I am sure she did."

"She intended to frighten you," replied Emeline, "and she has, apparently, succeeded."

"Flirting is an expression used by many people, the *Georginas* of the world, to alarm a young girl when they see her naturally gay, talking, or laughing, and to cause her to appear awkward or silly," said Lady Beverstone: "that is all I have been able to discover it means. It may also apply to frivolous or sentimental conversation with gentlemen, such as no well educated girl would join in; but that view of it can never be addressed to you. Ah!" continued she, "if people only knew the harm

they do by an unkind word, or a sarcastic manner of speaking, they would surely avoid it, especially when talking to those who have not had sufficient experience to be able at once to discover if they speak in earnest, in anger, or in jest."

"I hate the world!" cried Flora; "I am weary of it already."

"What is the world?" asked Lady Beverstone, smiling.

"London," answered Flora.

"Yet you have often been in this town before, and you have never been supposed to be in the *world* till this year."

Flora laughed. "The people in it, I mean."

"Most probably, Flora, there are more estimable people in London than anywhere, since the population is so great, and we cannot suppose every one among them to be bad."

"Certainly not, madam," answered Flora. "Society is what I detest."

"But only consider: if you never mixed in society, if you lived only for yourself, what a useless and unprofitable life yours would be."

Flora could not deny this truth; it coincided so exactly with her own thoughts during the years she had mourned her total inutility, and wondered what *end* was answered in her existence.

“ Frivolous, dissipated society, then,” she urged.

“ We are approaching the point now, Flora,” observed Lady Beverstone. “ What makes society bad but the badness of its individual members? We must not blame all for the faults of the few, and every one who tries to pass through the trials of life in a manner worthy of esteem reduces the universal stigma attached to what is called *the world*, by shewing that, however high may be their position, however great their riches, they are as excellent people as if they lived where no temptation could approach them, in solitude; and even more excellent, since they have more trials, and go honourably through all. So do not set out, my dear, by being a little lady-philosopher: if you suffer by unkindness, do not return it; choose your friends among the good, and act as your



conscience will approve ; and, though you may be in the world, you may be as good or better than when confined to the school-room at Bathurst Lodge," said Lady Beverstone, smiling.

Flora thought for a few moments upon all her new friend had said, when Emeline exclaimed, " You were at that play at Florence, where my brother went, were you not ? "

" Yes, and I liked it so much ! "

" Tell me about the actress," pursued Emeline.

" She was so lovely, and her voice magnificent !—and she appeared very young, younger than I am, I think."

" Who became first acquainted with her, and who engaged her, do you know, Flora ? " asked Lady Beverstone.

" I do not know ; I believe Mr. Rochfort, and she had her uncle with her. Such a strange-looking man ; " and she proceeded to describe him.

" Mamma ! " cried Emeline, suddenly, " it is exactly *his* description. I feel sure I should know him anywhere. I always had a suspicion he was concerned in her disappearance. Now

tell me, Flora," she eagerly exclaimed, "now tell me his name?"

"Mr. Edwardes."

"That is the very name Cecil discovered by asking at the inn," said Emeline; "now it is quite certain, mamma; all my fancies are verified. Oh that dear black wig! if ever you see him again, Flora, write to me and tell me all about him."

Flora looked surprised at the eagerness of her friend, and she answered, "He is so ugly."

"That he is!" cried Emeline; "Does your papa know anything about it; can we find out more from him?"

"Papa would never be introduced to him," said Flora; "he took a particular dislike to him, as Mr. Rochfort told me, and always avoided him."

"And, Mabe—— Mademoiselle Delville, did you ever see her again?" asked Emeline.

"Once I met her in the street, and she returned me my handkerchief which I had dropped."

"And why did you not speak to her and discover yourself?"

"My dear Emeline, you forget Lady Flora knows nothing of your suspicions, and has only seen her twice," interrupted her mother.

"I think I do," exclaimed Flora.

"How glad you would be to know her and meet her again," said Emeline.

"I heard your brother say, that she reminded him of a companion of his childhood, Mabel Gascoigne, who had also a beautiful voice; and I think he was convinced it was herself under a different name."

"Is that all you know?" inquired Emeline, with an accent of disappointment.

"Yes," replied Flora: "Can you tell me more about her?"

Emeline did not answer, for at that moment the carriage stopped at the door of a shop in Regent-street, and Lady Beverstone went in; but her young companions said they preferred sitting in the carriage to encountering the horrors and fatigues of shopping.

They consequently amused themselves with observing the various pedestrians, when Emeline started, laid her hand on the arm of

Flora, saying, "*Look!*" in a low mysterious tone.

Flora followed the direction of her eye, and perceived Mr. Edwardes. There was a slight crowd, and he stood for some moments close to the carriage, waiting to cross the street. He succeeded at last in his attempt; and when Emeline had watched until he was at some distance, she said: "How very odd he should appear the moment we were talking of him. Is he not a very disagreeable-looking man?"

"He is not particularly handsome," answered Flora, laughing; "and he annoyed me very much at Florence by looking at me; but even then I remarked that his eyes were fine, and his smile really beautiful."

"His piercing black eyes, I remember them well," said Emeline, "and I thought his smile was agreeable myself." She then told Flora of her interview with him at Westbrook, and about Mabel's sudden departure.

"Do not you think him a very awful personage? Should you not imagine his presence likely to foretell sorrow?"

"I hope not," said Flora, rather fearfully : "it did not the last time I saw him," she added, in a gayer tone.

"There is Cecil—I must tell Cecil I have seen him again," said Emeline, beckoning to him, and at her request he got into the carriage.

"Now you must guess whom I have just seen," cried his sister.

"I cannot guess, unless it be Francis Campbell."

"Nonsense, Cecil," said Emeline, slightly blushing ; "it is no unusual sight to see him ; but this man I have not beheld for ten years."

"Who can he be ?" asked Cecil.

"Mr. Edwardes," answered she triumphantly.

"Mr. Edwardes," repeated Cecil, as if the name were unfamiliar to him.

"Yes ! the gentleman in the black wig, who carried off Mabel. Have you forgotten ? and do you know, Cecil," continued she, smiling archly, "Do you know, I shall never employ you to find out anything for me again ; for, although you were a week in Florence, you

never discovered that Mademoiselle Delville's protector was a Mr. Edwardes, which is a certain proof that she was herself—"

"*That she was herself!* Rather a Milesian mode of speech," answered Cecil, smiling; but Flora imagined he looked annoyed, restless, and even unhappy.

"That Mademoiselle Delville was *our* Mabel, my pert brother," said Emeline; "and she appeared in her turn surprised that Cecil did not betray all the amazement she expected. "Flora knew it," continued his sister, "and she went out nowhere and saw nobody. I should like to find out what you were dreaming of, all the time you were in Florence, for you discovered nothing at all."

"I was even more stupid than usual," said Cecil.

"But you must make amends for it by hunting everywhere for Mr. Edwardes. I have seen him with my own eyes, so I know him to be still in existence," cried Emeline, "and you must never rest from your exertions until you have found Mabel and brought her to us."

"A very easy task," observed Cecil, turning to Flora; "to discover a Mr. Edwardes in this populous city, whom I saw ten years ago, when I do not know his direction, his occupation, or anything about him."

"I pity you, indeed!" said Flora, laughing.

"Apply first to Mr. Rochfort; I dare say he can assist you," exclaimed Emeline; "there is mamma coming."

"And I must go," said Cecil, springing out of the carriage.

"Pray drive with us; I have a thousand things to say to you yet," cried Emeline.

"No, thank you, I must begin this unsuccessful search, which I am convinced can end only with my life; you are determined I shall never have an idle moment," answered Cecil, as with a low bow to his sister he walked away.

Flora thought a great deal of her new acquaintances after she arrived at home. How different was the natural, gay, almost childish Emeline, from Georgina, the only other girl she was acquainted with,—as different as the kind Lady Beverstone from the worldly Mrs. Mulgrave.

“Lady Beverstone is right,” thought Flora; “the world to us is only good or bad, according as we know the good or bad who live in it. I know both; I wish it were possible to pierce into the depths of the future, and to find out which I am fated to dwell with. I should like no one better than Emeline to be my friend, even though she be the wife of Mr. Campbell.”

Flora’s experience this season was not all bad nor all good. She made very few acquaintances compared to Georgina’s acquisitions in that way, and Mrs. Mulgrave pronounced her from the first one little likely to be successful in the world. Indeed, the sudden change from total seclusion was so bewildering at first, that every one passed before her in a sort of mental phantasmagoria, and she retained a faint recollection of dresses, faces, and names,—all so new, that it was impossible to her to distinguish one from the other.

At least, if she thought she had seen a person before, she never remembered the name which belonged to the face; or, of the hundreds of



new names, she never could distinguish the individuals who bore them.

She soon remembered a number of persons whom she had met everywhere, but then a new perplexity arose ; she never could distinguish those she ought to know from those whom Mrs. Mulgrave and her father were not acquainted with ; and it often happened that the *unknown* were those whom she remembered best, for she had not been afraid to fix her eyes on them as part of the show she was observing.

In a sudden fit of paternal affection, Lord Eastland once declined Mrs. Mulgrave's offer, and took Flora himself to a ball at the palace. Here, to half the people he met, he said, " Let me present my daughter to you," but he entirely forgot the other half of the ceremony, and never told her their names ; so that, although they remembered a girl new that season, and identified her as Lord Eastland's daughter, *she*, not knowing their names, was never certain which dresses and which uniforms she had mechanically curtsied to, and, from a shrinking timidity and fear of ridicule, never bowed again

from a dread lest she should make a mistake in the person.

Often has she watched two people standing together, feeling she ought to know either or both, hoping to perceive such slight sign of recognition as would satisfy her that she did know them and might speak to them, but it was never made ; and poor Flora, in her unhappy isolation, began to imagine that the whole world had conspired to be ill-natured to her, for young or old, ladies or gentlemen, all seemed to wait for her to speak to them, when it was so much easier for them to recognize an entirely new face, than for her to distinguish her acquaintances among so many strangers.

She long debated what it could be that made every one behave so unfeelingly to her ; and she settled at last that it was because she was so ugly and vulgar-looking that they were ashamed of knowing her. Bitter were the tears she shed in solitude over her misfortunes, and great the depression of her spirits in consequence of them.

But her greatest trial was, on returning home, after two or three hours' misery, to have to

encounter all Mrs. Ridley's remarks the next morning, and her inquiries "how often she had danced, and with whom."

Flora's invariable answer was "No," or "Yes," according as she had seen Mr. Rochfort or not; for his goodnature was so excessive that, though he rarely danced—for he had begun to consider himself too staid and elderly for the recreation—he never saw her melancholy face, without asking her: he seemed to know, by intuition, how mortifying it must be to feel yourself neglected, to be the only one left out of the amusement going on before you.

One night, when Flora had danced also with Cecil Mulgrave, and she was able to announce to Mrs. Ridley her having had two partners in one night, the old lady's exclamation of surprise and wonder annoyed her pupil so much, that she determined that, even if such a wonderful event should occur again, which was not likely, she would allow her governess to discover it from other people: *she* would never be the first to tell her.

Mrs. Mulgrave was not the *chaperon* for a

timid girl; she was accustomed to her own daughter, who knew far more people even than she did; and besides, so fearful was she of Flora's being a rival to Georgina, that she was delighted to keep her in the back ground.

Lord Eastland had quite enough of the experience of that one evening; he never took charge of Flora again, for, as he observed to Mrs. Mulgrave, "the girl stuck to him like a leech; he could not get rid of her, even for an instant, and he could speak to nobody."

Besides, he had been too mortified by her appearance and stupidity, to care to be seen with her; it was bad enough to hear, "Your daughter has cut me," "Lady Flora has quite dropped *my* acquaintance," which remarks he retailed to Mrs. Mulgrave, who hastened to inform him they were perfectly true, and to promise to lecture Flora when next she saw her.

If people could only place themselves, for an instant, in the position of those they blame, perhaps they would be more lenient in their remarks.

Her only solace was in the society of the Beverstones; as the world looked colder upon her, so did the warmth of their friendship increase, and she learned to care less for Mrs. Ridley's or Georgina's remarks, now that she had some one who would cheer her, when smarting under them.

It would be difficult to describe the enthusiastic devotion with which she regarded Lady Beverstone; she was, in her eyes, an impersonation of all that was excellent and good, a second mother, the successor of that one whose remembrance had been cherished secretly in her heart for so many years, and Emeline, as her daughter, and as the affianced bride of Mr. Campbell, had a double claim upon her love.

Their marriage was settled to take place in the middle of June, and Flora was solicited to be bridesmaid.

Emeline could little guess what she requested when she asked that office of friendship, but Flora was very glad to accept it; that would surely give the death-blow to her foolish dreams,

which, though she had struggled to subdue them earnestly, would, nevertheless, sometimes intrude into her thoughts. The delusion had been beneficial to her, for, before she had entered on the busy scenes of life, it had taught her to set a guard on her heart, and had given her strength to pursue a disagreeable path with fortitude.

She knew that it was possible, if you endeavour heartily, to banish thoughts which ought not to be admitted into the heart; to destroy your own cherished delusion, and to live in the unpleasant actual life, without repining or regret.

She knew it to be possible, for she had accomplished it. Flora, the despised, stupid, awkward, and childish Flora, had attained a victory over herself, which most of those who looked down upon her might not have resolution or power to achieve. Flora, in her monotonous and bounded career, had suffered, struggled, and conquered. No one knew it but herself. A child, she had done what older women lack the fortitude to attempt; in her

narrow sphere, she had acted a noble part, and her mind, her heart, though foolish, though faulty, required very little—the encouragement of affection, the life-bestowing power of happiness—to possess all the ingredients of a fine, of a noble character.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ I would be thine !

Not passions wild emotion  
To show thee, fitful as the changing wind,  
But with a still, deep, fervent life-devotion,  
To be to thee, the help-meet God designed ;  
For *this will I* be thine !”

THE wedding-day arrived. Flora had never been present at a marriage; she wondered what it was like, and she was very anxious to know what duties were required from her as bridesmaid.

The party was to meet at the church, and Flora was to accompany her father there. As she got out of the carriage she saw a man, whose figure was familiar to her, enter the church-door before her; and as she turned to see whether her father was following her, she perceived the man who had excited her curiosity, and whom she recognised as Mr. Ed-



wardes, place himself exactly in her father's way, and she moreover observed Lord Eastland lingering at the door, as if unwilling to pass him.

Mr. Edwardes had pushed his wig further back on this day, and the increased forehead gave quite another appearance to his countenance. Flora could now easily imagine that in youth he might have been handsome. She wished, however, that he would move out of the way, or that her father would not mind him and come on. They were too early; nobody else was in the church, and she began to fear that neither of them would move, when her father appeared as if to summons up sudden resolution, for he walked on.

As he passed Mr. Edwardes, that person fixed his eye upon him, and in a voice of mingled reproach and warning, uttered the single word, "*Robert!*"

Lord Eastland turned suddenly pale, and looked almost horror-stricken; but he tried to follow Flora, and Mr. Edwardes, without another word, walked out of the church.

When the father and daughter were alone in the vestry, Lord Eastland threw himself on a chair and buried his face in his hands. Flora durst not speak to him; she had never seen him so disturbed before. She remembered the wonderful dislike Mr. Rochfort had told her he had always shewn to become acquainted with that man. Robert was her father's name; but why should a stranger pronouncing it affect him thus? It was very mysterious and unaccountable.

The clergyman now arrived, and the party began to assemble. Lord Eastland having by this time recovered his self-possession, stood up and spoke as usual; a slight contraction of the brow, a restless expression of the eye, alone remained to tell what he had thought or suffered.

Georgina was the other bridesmaid, and Flora thought the contrast between loveliness and unloveliness was never so visible as when she and her companion stood side by side, behind the pretty little bride.

Mr. Campbell arrived among the first, and he

instantly asked Flora if anything had particularly agitated her father on that day? She told him the adventure, which appeared to astonish him very much, but he could make no other comment upon it, except that everything connected with that man seemed very mysterious; and *that* Flora already knew.

Emeline appeared, and everybody seemed surprised by her beauty. Her features had always been small and delicate; but her complexion was pale and sickly, and languor had deadened the expression of her eye, and prevented her being thought lovely, although she looked interesting; but this day she appeared suddenly changed.

It was the magic power of happiness that enlightened and beautified her countenance, gave radiance to her eyes, and a calmness to her manner, which communicated its influence to all who beheld her. A child in her fragile figure and *petite* form, a woman in the deep expression of her fine eyes, which seemed to speak of affection pure and enduring, of joy, of hope, of goodness. Emeline's was the heaven-

born beauty of expression, it was the loveliness of the mind communicating itself to the features. She looked all that fancy would love to picture a youthful bride, leaving for the first time the home of her infancy, to trust herself to one in whose love she has the most unbounded confidence, and with whom she expects her life to be free from care or sorrow.

Flora gazed on her with love and pride. Emeline agreed with what, in her imagination, Mr. Campbell's wife ought to be, and she breathed a silent prayer that the future to them might be bright as it promised; they were suited to each other, worthy of each other, and surely if happiness ought to be the portion of the good, they deserved it.

Emeline was calm and self-possessed; and as she stood at Mr. Campbell's side she stole a glance of affection and confidence at him, and in a clear voice,—every syllable of which could be distinctly heard by those around,—with a joyous heart and peaceful smile she plighted her faith to the beloved of her youth, the first and only one at whose approach her heart had

beat with pleasure, whose absence had been sadness.

She had never known the bitterness or the shame of love unrequited ; she had passed through no trials ; she did not know what it was to sacrifice affection to principle ; nor had the coldness of the world taught her distrust, or its sarcasm misery. She was, in her devotion to Francis, gentle and confiding as an infant ; the first love-dream of early womanhood had been fulfilled, the first hope she had cherished accomplished, and in her present happiness the future appeared to present its brightest colouring.

Oh, the glorious dreams of youthful affection, how seldom are they fulfilled ! would that, of all those who yearly stand side by side before the altar, there were more who, in their gladness of soul, and their truthful earnest affection, undimmed by recollections of former miseries, resembled Emeline and Francis Campbell. They had no fear of the future ; through joy or sorrow they would walk side by side ; they would take refuge from the storms of life in each

other's society, mutually cheer and comfort the other, until the peaceful evening of their days, when, if one were taken first, the other would seek consolation in the hope of soon meeting again—to part no more !

Flora felt all this as she knelt behind Emeline, and she entirely forgot her blighted hopes, her saddened future, in her thoughts of them.

Once she looked round the church to see whether the mysterious Mr. Edwardes had returned there, and she discovered him and a lady, who kept her veil down the whole time, and whom she instantly conjectured to be Mabel, in one of the pews in the gallery ; they left hurriedly, as the bridal party prepared to return to the vestry, and she saw no more of them.

When the register was to be signed, Lord Beverstone requested Flora's father, as an old friend, to affix his name to it. He took the pen in his hand, and was about to do so, when he turned suddenly pale and trembled, while, pushing the book away in a hurried manner, he exclaimed, evidently under the influence of

great mental agitation, "There is no use in my signing it, so many have done so already;" and Lord Beverstone, much surprised, forbore to press him further.

The whole party proceeded to Bolton Street, where breakfast was prepared. Emeline did not appear at it, but she sent a message, requesting Flora to go up to her room, which excited the jealousy of Georgina, who was not asked to join them.

In return to Flora's affectionate congratulations, Emeline thanked her for having consented to be her bridesmaid, and continued, "I hope before long to be present at your marriage, and that you may have reason to feel as happy in your choice as I do."

After an affectionate embrace the friends parted. Emeline was going abroad for some months, but she made Flora promise that when she returned, and was established in a house of her own, she would visit her.

On joining the party again, Flora found that her father had departed, and left her to Mrs. Mulgrave's care.

“What friends you and Emeline are,” cried Georgina. “Do you remember, Flora, what a long time it is since I shewed you the announcement of her marriage in the newspaper?”

How could Flora have forgotten? and she believed Georgina knew too much to ask that question without an unkind motive.

“You little expected then to be her bridesmaid; you did not even know her; how very strangely things happen sometimes,” continued Georgina; “I think you had seen Mr. Campbell even at that time, though you were still supposed to be a child.”

Little did Georgina imagine the effect her words produced on Flora, from the unembarrassed manner in which she replied, “Yes, he had been to Bathurst Lodge.”

“I little expected Emeline to marry so young,” said Georgina; “you could not think her pretty, did you, Flora?”

“She was more than pretty,” answered Flora; “and to-day nobody could deny that she looked lovely.”

“People always say so of a bride,” returned



Georgina, carelessly ; “ for my part I cannot say I agree with them ; or, if there is beauty it must reside in the veil, or in the orange flowers, for your bride is usually agitated and sometimes even weeps, which certainly does not improve any one’s beauty.”

“ I can account for that when people enter lightly into such a sacred engagement, from interested or worldly motives,” said Mr. Rochfort, who had joined them unperceived ; “ but to-day you saw nothing of that, Miss Mulgrave. Your cousin had too much confidence in Mr. Campbell, and in her own love, to be agitated. It was no sudden resolution, formed in the excitement of passion, or founded on the hope of wealth ; they knew and could trust each other. It was the firm determination of reason, and the approbation of their respective parents ratified their choice.”

“ You are eloquent, Mr. Rochfort,” said Georgina, carelessly. “ Flora,” she continued, “ it may be your turn next ; you must let me be bridesmaid again.”

“ It is more likely I should be yours,

Georgina," answered Flora; " You have such a large acquaintance."

" But the pretty bride of to-day had very few," began Mr. Rochfort, when Mrs. Mulgrave approached. She never liked Georgina to be disturbed in her conversation with anybody by the presence of a third person. " Her daughter was shy, and did not like to speak before company," so she came to ask Flora to look at a chair Lady Beverstone had herself worked, and which was certainly most beautifully executed.

Flora had often admired it in her almost daily visits, but she had not, perhaps, done it justice, for she could not understand its beauties, having a deep-rooted natural antipathy to work, arising, perhaps, from its always suggesting to her mind Mrs. Ridley's interminable knitting.

Mrs. Mulgrave, consequently, like a wise and judicious friend, seized this favourable occasion to advise Flora to cultivate that peculiarly feminine talent.

Cecil, who overheard a few words, and who

knew from his sister the length and tediousness of his aunt's speeches, overcame his dislike to Lady Flora, in compassion for all she was now enduring; and approaching them, exclaimed, "My dear aunt, you almost make me a convert to your opinion! I am really half inclined to learn, myself. What ought I to begin with—hemming a handkerchief? And do you think," he continued, in a serious tone, "that I might attain in time to the perfection of that?"

Mrs. Mulgrave was always half afraid of her nephew; he sometimes saw more than she intended. Her only answer was a contemptuous smile.

"My dear aunt, pray do not treat me thus," cried Cecil; "I am in earnest. You cannot think how ashamed I feel in the evening to see ladies so busy, so usefully employed, and to be doomed to perfect idleness. It is so very bad to be unemployed; I have serious thought of learning some mechanical art, but, unfortunately, those sort of tools are so noisy they interrupt conversation; the needle alone is silent. I have

a distinct recollection now of having once been taught to net, in order to keep me out of mischief, as my old nurse said. I recollect the calm and quiet winter evenings when I sat cross-legged on the nursery carpet, with my string tied round the leg of the table. How happy I was until that sad night, when I gave such a desperate pull to a knot I had made, that I upset the tables and the candles over my old nurse's new gown, and from that hour she gave up teaching me to be quiet, and put the meshes out of sight."

Flora laughed at the grave manner in which Cecil detailed all this; but, although Mrs. Mulgrave looked bored, she evidently considered that Flora, unlike Georgina, required a third person to help her to talk, so she very charitably victimised herself for her benefit, and soon after was joined by her daughter.

Very few days after the wedding, Lord Eastland informed his daughter that she had had quite enough of London—she had done no good there—she knew nobody—and that it was better for her and Mrs. Ridley to return to Bathurst

Lodge, where he would join them at the end of the season, and that he hoped to persuade Mrs. Mulgrave to reside there during the time her husband would be in Scotland shooting. "It is entirely for your sake that I do it, Flora," he continued, "Georgina will be such a good example for you in everything, and I trust you will have the sense to imitate her."

Mrs. Ridley immediately responded that she perfectly agreed to all his lordship observed, and that her most anxious wish was to see Lady Flora resemble Miss Mulgrave.

Flora thought she must be very prejudiced or very jealous not to perceive all Georgina's excellences, and that it was her own ungovernable pride which made her feel that she would rather be as she was in everything, than be guilty of some of the actions of her father and Mrs. Ridley's favourite.

She had plenty of time to think of the events of the last two months, and to reflect on all her own actions. She had found no pleasure in the dissipated life she had been leading, and the only person she regretted was Lady Beverstone.

But an event soon occurred which led her to think that all her attachments were to be equally unfortunate, and that if she liked people, something was sure to occur to prevent her seeing much of them, or misfortune in some shape was sure to pursue them. But as this event was of more importance to others than to Flora, we shall make it the subject of a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER VII.

I am no villain ; I am the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Bois.

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD BEVERSTONE had two brothers ; one, the father of Georgina, was near his own age, but the other was many years younger. He had been intended for the navy, but after his first voyage he complained so bitterly of all the hardships he had to endure, that his mother, who was then in a declining state of health, had entreated her husband to consent to his abandoning that profession ; and, in the army, which was his next choice, he remained only a few years.

In vain had Lord Beverstone remonstrated with him on this unsteadiness of purpose, and detailed to him the dangers into which it was likely to lead him : like too many others, Al-

bert Mulgrave promised fair, but the remembrance of his promises vanished like smoke.

On succeeding to his title, his generous brother paid all his debts, and settled on him a handsome annuity, and Albert, who now thought himself a rich man, disdained any occupation, and amused himself with every pleasure that suggested itself to his mind. Above all other things, he disliked the trouble of thinking, and, consequently, when some bill was presented to him which he had not paid, he either conveniently forgot it or hit on some temporary expedient for silencing the creditor.

He fell in love with Mary Howard, the daughter and sole heiress of a small country gentleman, and he immediately married her, replying to his brother's advice, that he was not rich enough to keep a wife, by assuring him he should live mostly with her father, who meant to leave all he possessed to his child, and that it would thus be a great saving to him ; but his first exploit was to go abroad, because Mary had never left her own country; and that his fine horses might not suffer from idleness, he



took them with him, and drove four-in-hand through France.

To procure ready money for travelling expenses, he borrowed it at an enormous interest ; which interest, when it became due, he could not pay, and was forced to borrow again. The whole of his next year's income was gone before new year's day arrived, and he contrived, through Mary, to coax her father out of a considerable sum to get him out of his difficulties, which he had no sooner received than he heard of a foreign railroad, which was expected to succeed wonderfully, and in which he invested the whole, thinking it would turn out a very excellent speculation. It failed, however ; but at this juncture, luckily, as circumstances compelled him to think (although he could not help feeling the loss of one who had been so kind and generous to him), Mr. Howard died, leaving the whole of his property to his daughter, who did not hesitate to transfer it to her husband's hands for the purpose of relieving him from his embarrassments, which he protested were but temporary, and which he averred would be

exceeded by an amount of property almost past imagination to conceive. But his faithful Mary, always delicate, and who, for some years past, had suffered much disquietude and anxiety of mind, did not live to witness the realization or the failure of these anticipations. In a few months she was laid by the side of her father ; and Albert, who had always shewn the warmest affection for her, went abroad for a year, and secluded himself from society.

When, at length, he returned, he seemed inclined to estrange himself from the whole of his family. He seldom called upon his brother when he was in town, and was never seen at Westbrook. He had, indeed, been met in the streets two or three times by Lord Beverstone ; but on these occasions he had exhibited an air of hurry and distraction, and had pleaded most important business in the city, which admitted of no delay.

Lord Beverstone had not seen his brother for more than two years, when he called upon him one morning, and with an agitation, the genuineness of which could not be doubted, informed

him that he was utterly, and he feared, unless he could be by some means assisted, irretrievably ruined.

It was the morning after Emeline's marriage, and Lord Beverstone was feeling very lonely without her ; he was, therefore, less prepared than usual to bear this shock.

Albert seemed alarmed when he saw his brother's despairing countenance, and doubtless he bitterly reproached himself for bringing such despair upon him ; but when in a calm voice, Lord Beverstone declared he was ready to investigate all, Albert brightened up ; he thought his brother would pay as he had done once before, and that all would yet be right.

He knew that Lord Beverstone had the keenest horror of debt ; and that justice led him to accuse no one more severely than those who by their rashness involved others in ruin.

Lord Beverstone applied himself deliberately and calmly to the investigation of the accounts, as far as he was able to understand such complicated documents ; and when he had done so he was perfectly astonished at their immense

amount. It was no light matter that was required of him. If he paid all Albert's debts he must reduce himself almost to poverty ; if he did not, how many perhaps would suffer !

Interest was on one side, generosity and justice on the other, and in Lord Beverstone's mind there could be no choice between the two. He hastened to his wife, and simply stated to her the facts.

What could her decision be but the same as his own.

"It is no sacrifice to dwell in retirement, dear Cecil," said she ; "and the debts cannot remain unpaid."

Lord Beverstone tenderly embraced her. Six-and-twenty years of mutual love and esteem had taught each respectively the other's worth. Their sentiments had ever agreed, for they were founded on the broad principles of truth and virtue. Through prosperity they had assisted each other, would adversity totally change them ?

"There is only one thing I much regret," said Lord Beverstone ; "and that is poor Cecil's

disappointment. He was so anxious to get into Parliament, and it will be impossible to accomplish that now."

"Poor Cecil," repeated Lady Beverstone, with the fond regret of a mother; "I pity him sincerely, but I am sure he will not shew that he feels the disappointment."

Cecil at that instant appeared, and his father firmly and calmly repeated to him all he had told his mother. Cecil listened patiently to the end, and he then exclaimed,—

"I need not ask which course you intend to pursue, my father; I am already satisfied you will lean to that which has justice and honour on its side, and I am ready to second every thing you propose."

Lady Beverstone fixed on her son a look of fond pride and admiration, with which a mother's heart alone can beat.

"My Cecil," said she, "I grieve for your disappointment about getting into Parliament."

"Pray do not grieve for me, dearest mother. Do you think I am to be pitied when I have you and my father to devote myself to;" cried

Cecil, enthusiastically ; but he saw a bright tear standing in his gentle mother's eye, and he felt she appreciated his resolution, and could feel for the destruction of his long cherished hope.

"While I have her to grieve for me, and her to understand and love me, am I not most excessively fortunate?" he thought ; while Lord and Lady Beverstone felt grateful that whatever sorrows they might have, whatever mortifications to encounter, they had still the sweetest of consolation in their beloved children.

"There is yet one more trial in store for you, my dear," continued Lord Beverstone, addressing his wife ; "in our present reduced circumstances we cannot afford to live at Westbrook. The house is too large, we could not keep it up, and while we seek a smaller dwelling, I think it will be advisable to let that."

"I can be happy anywhere with you and Cecil," was the answer he received.

"And this house we will sell. We shall not require it now," observed Lord Beverstone ; "for although I intend to give up almost all my

income, I fear it will be two or three years before I shall have succeeded in paying off everything."

"Poor foolish Albert," exclaimed Lady Beverstone. "How bitterly he must reproach himself,—how much he must suffer."

Lord Beverstone felt that Albert did not sufficiently know the evil of his conduct: that for the moment he lamented his brother's having to live in retirement through his folly; but, he was so thoughtless, so indifferent, that it had really made very little impression upon him.

"All I fear," said he, "is that as soon, or even before he is out of difficulties, he will begin again!"

"He cannot be so selfish," cried Cecil; "he cannot surely do so."

"We never can tell, Cecil, what a man may do who is undecided and wavering; and who is like a feather tossed about by every chance breath of air," answered his father.

These words made a deep impression upon Cecil, not because the truth contained in them

had never previously solicited his attention, but that their application to his uncle gave rise to serious considerations. If his father, from a principle however heroic, was about to reduce himself almost to absolute poverty for years, to pay the debts, for the second or third time, of a man who would probably again have recourse to him whenever a necessity, created by his own folly, should arise, it seemed to Cecil a very important point, to ascertain fully and completely that there was something in this case rendering it imperative upon his father to make so tremendous a sacrifice. Cecil was of a noble and generous nature. All his finer qualities he had inherited from Lord Beverstone; but the more he thought upon this matter in connexion with his beloved parents, the more anxious was he to be assured that an act, which was intended to be one of magnanimity, should not, when the circumstances became known, be pronounced an effusion of madness, or derided as a piece of folly.

Accordingly, in the course of the evening, when Cecil knew that Lord Beverstone had



retired to his study, he followed him thither and requested his attention for a few minutes.

“I am very far, sir,” he said, “from wishing to dissuade you from carrying out your benevolent intentions in my uncle’s favour, although you have told me enough to make me lament that so much should be expected or requested of you ; but, if you have not already given your word to him, I presume to think that you might fairly pause before—”

“I have not given my word, Cecil,” interposed Lord Beverstone ; “indeed, I could not do so, until I had ascertained whether it was really in my power to comply with his request, the amount required being so large ; but, now that I have satisfied myself that the money may be raised, I fancy there can be no pause in the matter, for the emergency is nothing less than imminent.”

“May I ask, sir,” inquired Cecil, “whether my uncle has laid any statement of his affairs before you, and, if so, whether you have examined it?”

“He did present a confused collection of

figures for my inspection," answered Lord Beverstone; "but, beyond the deficit at the bottom of the page, which was only too intelligible, I confess, I could not very clearly comprehend them. I can understand my steward's accounts, and I can see the balance in my banker's book at a glance, and perhaps I might make out a stock-broker's debits and credits; but my poor brother Albert, I fear, has not the art of arranging his accounts with the exactness of one of his Capel Court friends."

"He has, then, been speculating on the Stock Exchange?"

"Very largely, and with a very lamentable result," replied Lord Beverstone. "And I believe he has not sought fortune solely in the funds."

Cecil was silent for a minute or two, his father regarding him earnestly and with grave benevolence the while. At length, he observed,

"It strikes me, father, that you should have the best assurance you can obtain that the sacrifice you are about to make is demanded from you by an imperative necessity."

"Alas, Cecil," said Lord Beverstone, "I am at least certain upon that point."

"I do not speak on my own account," resumed Cecil, hurriedly. "What you are about to do I know will be right, and I shall cheerfully bow to it; but is it not possible that my uncle may have resources which he does not wish at present to touch, or friends to whom he does not care as yet to apply?"

"I cannot think so," replied Lord Beverstone; "his emotion, when he called upon me, was too real, and his shame at applying to me too sincere to justify that supposition. Besides," he added, in a higher, although a trembling voice, "my father's son—my poor Albert! No, Cecil; your uncle has been vain, frivolous, and wayward, he has many faults, but he has yet—I protest I think so—a sense of honour within him that would utterly forbid his committing so ignoble an act."

"Pardon me, dear sir," exclaimed Cecil, "I meant not to impute dishonour to him; but I have heard how sanguine speculators commonly are, and perhaps he does not

know *what* a sacrifice he calls upon you to make."

"That is very likely," said Lord Beverstone, with a sigh; "and indeed, Cecil, it is a sacrifice; but, indeed, likewise it must be made. I told him he should hear from me by two o'clock to-morrow at my solicitor's. I cannot meet him there, for I would spare him unnecessary pain; but, I confess, having released him from his embarrassments, I could wish to know of what nature are his future intentions, a question which of course I could not instruct Mr. Bevan to ask."

"Shall I wait upon him to-morrow morning?" asked Cecil; "I think he will be frank with me; for, as a boy, I was a favourite of his. I shall be glad to see him again, and perhaps I may induce him to call upon you."

Lord Beverstone mused for a few moments.

"Perhaps it may be as well if you do go to him, Cecil," he said at length; "here is his direction," and he handed his son a card, "in lodgings, I suspect. Poor Albert! He should have kept up his correspondence with me." So

saying, Lord Beverstone turned to his writing-table, perhaps to conceal his emotion, and his son took his leave.

Cecil could get no continuous sleep that night for thinking of his uncle and his affairs. In the first instance, he had unhesitatingly conceded the propriety of his father's course, and even now his heart as warmly applauded it as before. It was not the extent of the loss, but the nature of it that perplexed him, and seemed to cloud his perceptions of right and wrong. "At this rate," thought he, "the extravagance or recklessness of another may undermine, nay, utterly destroy a fortune, which has been raised by long years of laborious industry, by an appeal to feelings which are known to exist, but to which, in proportion as their existence is known, it is humiliation and baseness to appeal." And yet, after all, he could not but acknowledge to himself that, under the like circumstances, he should have acted as his father had done ; and he began to take himself to task for his petulant and boyish coxcombry in judging another so harshly, and that other his near relation, before he himself

had known how hard it is to resist temptation. He arose, therefore, and after a hasty breakfast went forth to call upon his uncle, in a mood of mind which contributed greatly to his inward comfort; for he had satisfied himself that justice, on this earth of ours, is an admirable quality, which, however, is best seen displayed in the public magistrate; but that in our private relations, kindness, generosity, and mercy are indeed "twice blest," and that they sometimes do the work of justice more efficiently, and in a more heavenly manner.

Mr. Albert Mulgrave lived in one of those old-fashioned streets at the west-end of the town, which had once resounded with the rattle of carriages, but which have now fallen from their high estate. The houses were large, and in those spacious apartments many a beau had tapped his jewelled snuff-box and flourished his thumb and forefinger with an air; and many a beauty in a hoop had unfurled her fan, and made her elaborate curtsey. But now the street was a long double row of brick-and-mortar desolation. The occupants of the houses, rarely to be

seen at the windows, for the opposite dwellings "threw a browner horror" over the scene, were of a heavy and saturnine character; the servants of a morose and wrangling disposition, who snubbed the footboy and snarled at the baker; and the very cats, when they dragged themselves up the area steps, looked as though they were utterly weary of their nine lives.

It was with a feeling of heartfelt sympathy that Cecil knocked at the door indicated on his uncle's card. An old deaf woman answered his summons; and being made to understand that the visitor wished to see Mr. Mulgrave, preceded him to the first floor, and ushered him into a drawing-room, saying that she would tell the gentleman, and that he would most likely be down in a few minutes.

Cecil had enough to engage his attention till his uncle appeared. The room, although large, was crowded with articles of the most incongruous description, which would have been more in place in a broker's shop than a drawing-room; and the walls were covered with what seemed to be old paintings, of all sizes;

but hung as though studiously to make their defects more distinctly seen. Cecil was attentively regarding a very large one over the mantel-piece when Mr. Mulgrave entered the room, but so softly that his nephew did not hear him.

"Ha! Cecil, is it you, boy?" exclaimed Mr. Mulgrave, advancing and extending his hand with a slight embarrassment of manner; "I am very glad to see you! You were looking at that picture. It is a Rubens. Do you not think it a very fine painting?"

"I do not profess myself a great judge of paintings," cried Cecil, "but the design appears to me masterly."

"It is so; yet I lost five hundred pounds by it. You must know it is an English Rubens."

"An English Rubens!" echoed Cecil, smiling. "Ah! I remember, Rubens was for some time resident in this country."

"He was; but this was manufactured in a back shed in Wardour Street," said Mr. Mulgrave, coolly. "The original, I believe, is at



Antwerp. But draw a chair and sit down. Now, pray don't knock over that model. I have a special regard for it. You must know it is a model of a gigantic coffee-mill that was to have set to work all the grocers' boys in the kingdom. I hope the air of South Australia agrees with the inventor, and that he has still got my hundred and fifty pounds in his pocket. That railroad engine," pointing to it, "was a much more serious business. It was to be neither on the steam nor atmospheric principle; but the rest is a secret. This I can tell you: it was tried for a short distance, and pronounced admirably suited for a funeral line to Kensall Green cemetery."

Mr. Mulgrave laughed, but Cecil, although his complaisance suggested that he ought to laugh in concert, could only produce a wretched caricature of a smile. And no wonder. His uncle, he knew, was little more than forty years of age; but his grizzled hair, his shaggy eyebrows, his restless and suspicious eyes, and his drawn visage, contributed to make him appear an old man. Wrapt in a dressing-

gown, his hand tightly clasped it over his chest, and a short and hollow cough interposed between every half dozen words.

"You are not very well, I fear," said Cecil, after a long pause, during which Mr. Mulgrave had been buried in profound reflection.

He started. "I am very ill, I believe," he answered, "and I must get better as soon as I can; and if I cannot get better, I must prepare to die as well as I can. Well,—Cecil,—what next? Well?"

"I do not understand—" began Cecil.

"What brought you here this morning?" said Mr. Mulgrave, with a slight blush, but with a smile that so reminded Cecil of his father, that he was much moved by it.

"My dear uncle, I will tell you in an instant. My father bade me inform you that Mr. Bevan expects you at two o'clock."

"He has then consented to—"

"Most assuredly."

"I knew he would. Cecil was ever too good to me. Heaven bless him for it!" and he walked to the window.

“And he desired me to say,” resumed Cecil, after he had regained his composure,—“that he wishes you to call upon him that you may renew your ancient and brotherly friendship. He would be glad to know your intentions for the future.”

“As to my intentions,” exclaimed Mr. Mulgrave, turning from the window suddenly, and resuming his seat, “how should a man in my situation entertain, encourage, tempt towards him and embrace any further intentions? Much might be done yet—much might be done; but, in the first place, I shall never again have the means of doing anything, and, in the next, I no longer possess the physical power. This cough, Cecil, is a voice that proceeds from some few feet beneath the ground, and bids me come thither. Intentions! Ah! Would a few more years might be granted me!”

Cecil was much shocked. “Let me hope that you are not so ill as you suppose,” he said. “My father will be much grieved to hear—”

“Of my death? I know he will,” interrupted Mr. Mulgrave. “He will be greatly grieved.

But, Cecil, were I to die this instant, his grief would be the greater because it would be mingled with contempt, which it is hideous to feel towards those we love, and he does love me—he has shown it. But he does not know me—no, he does not know me. What do *you* take me for, Cecil?”

“My dear uncle—”

“What do you take me for, Cecil? I have been spoken of in your household, and my character has been drawn at large, although with a delicate pencil. The outline may have been correct, but the colouring has been at fault, as it is there,” and he pointed to his “English Rubens.” “Cecil, to those who know me not thoroughly, I am just the character whose fate might point a moral. I have been pronounced a futile, thoughtless, extravagant fellow,—as unstable as a vane, and as capricious as the wind that moves it.”

Cecil remembered his father's words of the day before and almost started; but his looks betrayed something, which his uncle noticed, but did not appear to regard. He continued,

folding his hands together, with some complacency,

“ Now, Cecil, I am no such thing ; I am neither the wind of all quarters, nor a weather-cock, nor have I been for many years. People commonly make the mistake of supposing that a man’s character (by which they mean their estimate of him, when they first thought they knew him) never changes. Now, sir, as we know, physically speaking, that a man is entirely changed five or six times during his natural life, so is it as true that his character of mind undergoes an entire alteration. We live according to our knowledge or our passions ; as the one increases, or the others are diminished, so are we new men. I was intended for the sea, but I liked not the profession ; I entered the army, but that suited with my inclinations no better. There was a long peace, and no chance of promotion. Well, I was young and extravagant (are youth and imprudence rare ?), and I contracted debts, which I could not pay without borrowing, and when a man wishes to eat fruit before the

season, he must give a high price for it. Well, again ; I did do this, but during this, I suffered so much, from ~~the~~ wretches who had me in their ~~hands~~—from the friends (wretches too) who had me in their eye, that I swore in my soul that I would be revenged upon them. And how, think you ? By becoming a rich man ; for poverty, in this land of ours, is a greater crime than was ever sent before the judge, even when he had his black cap with him, and knew he should have to don it. I have failed, it is true."

"What then, uncle," exclaimed Cecil, earnestly, "do you mean to say that you have been striving to raise a fortune, and that you have pursued a systematic course towards that end ?"

"I do, sir," replied Mr. Mulgrave, almost sternly. "I was a younger brother. My education did not fit me for one of the learned professions. A merchant requires a large capital, and I could not sell candles or weigh out soap. I could not trade, therefore I must speculate, and fortune has not always been unkind to me,

and perhaps she might smile on me now. There is a glorious opportunity at this moment; but I must not think of it. Your father's money shall be honourably applied. Oh, Cecil!—but I am detaining you. I find I have talked too much."

Here his cough became so prolonged and violent, that Cecil, although he would willingly have remained with one who had begun so deeply to interest him, could not venture to lengthen his visit. He took his hat, and held forth his hand to his uncle.

Mr. Mulgrave shook it cordially, and arose.

"I forgot," he said, "I wanted a considerable sum more than appeared in my account. I told my brother, and I saw he would provide that, too. What a thing to die worth something! I am a fool. Tell him—my dear brother—that I have a destination for that money, a sacred one, and that I thank him. I would say more, but wherefore?"

He pressed his nephew's hand, and turned away.

As soon as Cecil got home, he sought his

father, and told him all that had occurred. Lord Beverstone was astonished and affected at the recital.

“ We have mistaken him,” he said, when his son had concluded ; “ but not so much as he mistakes himself. I will see him before we leave London. All is settled with Bevan, and now my mind is, for the present, easy.”

And he did see his brother ; but he was very ill, and, beyond snatches of reminiscence of his youthful days, he said little or nothing. He was incomprehensible.

Lord Beverstone now employed himself in looking for some quiet house in the country where they might live, and he at length fixed on one in a pretty secluded Welsh village, called Hawthorn Cottage, which seemed admirably to suit his purpose. The rooms were few, but more lofty than usual in small houses, which he knew would be a great advantage for Lady Beverstone. It is not so easy for one accustomed to large apartments and plenty of air, to endure the martyrdom of a low ceiling.

It was, besides, convenient ; the doors shut



well, the fire-places were large, and the garden was very pretty and full of flowers. It was exactly the place to suit them, and Lady Beverstone's expressions of delight when she saw it, more than repaid her husband for the personal exertions he had made to discover it. The village was very picturesque, not half a mile off, and, moreover, there was a large house with a fine park, belonging to a Colonel D'Eyncourt, who seldom resided there, and was so courteous as to allow his neighbours to walk or drive on his property.

This was all very pleasant, yet still it was a bitter change from having possessed vast estates of his own; and Lady Beverstone longed for her schools and all her pensioners, and Lord Beverstone lamented the sudden stop put to all his agricultural and other schemes. It was very distressing to have his formerly boundless exertions limited to a narrow sphere; to leave a place he had got into order, even almost created anew, just as it was beginning to repay all his trouble, and flourishing exactly as he would wish.

They wrote to Mr. Campbell and to Emeline, entreating them to make no difference in their plans on their account, but to continue abroad as long as they liked.

It must be confessed that the first time Lady Beverstone was left alone at Hawthorn Cottage, during the absence of her husband and son on business, she felt very lonely without her usual objects of interest, and that she missed Emeline far more than she had yet done; but she was not one to give way to despondency, and she quickly found herself occupation; and though she sighed for her daughter's absence, it was a sigh mingled with a grateful feeling that she was happy.

As Cecil and his father journeyed to London, it chanced that the railroad-carriage into which they got was empty, and to Mr. Mulgrave's great surprise, after a few moments' silence, his father thus addressed him:—

“My son, although you have lost, for a few years, that fortune which you would have applied to a worthy use, and although our house is necessarily small, remember it is still

large enough to be a happy home, even if you desire to add another to our small family. You are independent of fortune, for you are rich in the fewness of your wants, and in the many pleasures your talents afford you. In your choice you need not therefore consider money, and if you behold your dear mother, you can perceive that great beauty is not wanting to make a woman estimable, to render her an intellectual member of society, a devoted wife, a tender and judicious parent. When, therefore, uninfluenced by either of these considerations, your heart has made its choice ; when you confidently believe you have discovered one worthy to be the successor of your mother at Westbrook ; one who will be to you all she has been to me, and who will rear your children to resemble you, do not hesitate nor imagine that we may not like your choice ; do not consider we must be consulted, for the wife of your choice, Cecil, must be, necessarily, dear to us. She can but add another dear one to our small circle. I have but one word of advice to give to you on this subject, Cecil. Let her, in

goodness, resemble your mother ; and then, years hence, when the course of our earthly career is run, you will have one friend true to you, in bad or in good fortune, and you will experience in the virtues of your children the blessing you have been to us !”

He ceased ; his voice was inaudible from emotion.

Cecil's heart beat with love and gratitude towards his beloved father ; he said little, such thoughts are too deep for words, but they understood each other.

Cecil, however, after some minutes, relapsed into thought : he marvelled at what could have made his father choose such a subject to converse upon then. Where was such a wife to be found ?

Even if he discovered Mabel, she would, reject his suit again ; and every other person was indifferent to him, there was no one he thought of more than another. He fancied it strange, that now, when he was likely to live in seclusion, his father should speak to him of what he had never hinted before ; so he agreed

it was only an effusion of paternal tenderness, suggested by the remembrance of his mother, and the hope that Cecil might be as happy in his choice as his father had proved before him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Take physic, pomp !  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,  
And show the Heavens more just.

SHAKESPEARE.

CÆCIL had some particular business to transact for his father, and accordingly was compelled to remain in town for a few weeks. He took apartments in Jermyn Street, from which he seldom stirred, except when Lord Beverstone's affairs required his attendance at Mr. Smith's office ; and was so quiet and courteous a lodger, that the worthy landlady, who at first suspected he might be in debt, and therefore a dangerous inmate, finding her rent paid with scrupulous regularity, began to entertain a shrewd notion that he was in love,

and felt as much pity for him as a bustling woman, who has a large house to attend to, and servants to look after, can be reasonably supposed to have time to encourage.

In truth, Cecil had become far more thoughtful of late. The conviction had forced itself upon him that the last year or two of his life had been most unprofitably spent,—that the chief part of his time had been wasted in frivolous pleasures or idle occupation, and he had come to a resolution of affecting a thorough reform in his habits.

One day, he was returning from a consultation with the solicitor to his lodgings, when he was suddenly touched on the shoulder, and, turning round, was grasped warmly with both hands by a gentleman some years older than himself, who at the same moment exclaimed,

“Cecil Mulgrave, my dear friend! I am delighted to see you—I heard you were in Wales.”

“What! Rochfort!” cried Cecil with a

glow of pleasure, heartily returning the shake of his hand ; " I thought you were gone back to Italy."

" Returned a long while ago, dear Cecil ; I have been to America since, and seen the model Republic at work in every State of the Union. But where are you going ? I want to have a long talk with you."

" I am going to my lodgings."

" Come and dine with me at mine. You will ? That 's a good fellow. But first I have a call or two to make. You don't mind walking ?"

" I prefer it," said Cecil.

" So do I. Now, just wait at the corner of this street for three minutes, while I say a word or two to a new acquaintance in whom I take an interest. It is only a few doors down."

So saying, Mr. Rochfort hurried away, and presently Cecil heard his brisk knock at the door, and turning round saw him waiting for admittance.



The father of Mr. Rochfort was a gentleman of property who had died whilst his son was yet a child ; but he had confided him to the guardianship of a wealthy merchant, who so well fulfilled the trust which had been reposed in him, that when he came of age, he found himself in possession of a very ample fortune. He had been a frequent visitor at Westbrook, and, in common with every one who made his acquaintance, Cecil had conceived a strong attachment to him. He was one of those very few men who are keenly alive to every pleasure that may be commended to their notice, but who shew no partiality for any one gratification in particular. He could ride or row with the best, but he enjoyed a walk equally well ; and he could be the liveliest of the gay at an evening party, and yet extract as much enjoyment out of a book in the solitude of his own room. He left college with the reputation of being a scholar, and a man of no ordinary talent ; but, like Cecil, as yet he had done nothing great to

justify the expectations that had been formed of him.

It was not long before he rejoined Cecil.

"The strangest fellow!" he said laughing, "the man I have just called upon. He is shy at present; I almost believe he thinks I have a design upon him."

"May I ask who is your new friend?" inquired Cecil.

"His name is Simpson—Mr. Richard Simpson. I fear he is a man who 'hath had losses,' and is now suffering for his misfortunes, or paying the penalty of his folly. He lectures on the British Constitution, and I made his acquaintance at some literary and scientific rooms in the Commercial Road. A very sensible person, Simpson; and by no means without information."

"And what on earth," exclaimed Cecil, in surprise, "drew you down to that remote region?"

"A will I have to see my fellows in all classes of life," answered Mr. Rochfort. "This Lon-

don is a mighty metropolis, and I want to see 'what breeds about her heart,' as Shakspeare says; whether it be ignorance or sin, or both conjoined, or how much of either."

"You were always a strange fellow," observed Cecil.

"I am in the right track now, Mulgrave; I have my 'mission,' as the modern canters say, and I mean to fulfil it."

"But what part of your mission are you about to complete just now?" asked Cecil; for during the preceding talk they had been walking rapidly through several obscure streets.

"Wait a moment, Cecil," said Mr. Rochfort. "This is a neighbourhood to puzzle Sir Walter Raleigh's dog. Raleigh contended that dogs have reason: for, said he, if a dog that has lost its master come to a place where three roads branch off, he smells at one road. No—at another—no—but he does not smell at the third, which shews the *therefore*: that your logical dog is up to a syllogism. I

wonder what a lost dog would do in the Seven Dials."

"And are we now in the Seven Dials?" said Cecil.

"Even so, my friend. Ha! this is the street—No. 42, the second floor."

They walked down the street, and Mr. Rochfort presently halted at the door of one of the most wretched tenements in that most wretched part of the west end of London.

"I am going to make a call here," said Mr. Rochfort.

"And keep me waiting again? No,"—for Cecil's curiosity was aroused; "I must accompany you. You must not enter that place without me."

"As you please," observed Mr. Rochfort; "come then," and he pushed open the door which was ajar, and entered a very narrow passage. Two or three steps brought them to the stairs, which had even less width than the passage.

"Follow me," said Mr. Rochfort, and Cecil obeyed in wonderment.

Mr. Rochfort was obstructed on the landing by a gentleman who had just reached it from above.

"Ah! Mr. Larkins, I hope you are well," said Mr. Rochfort "and that your patient is better."

"Much better, sir;—very much better," answered Mr. Larkins; "and very sensible to whom her improvement is owing. Decent, honest people, sir. Good morning!" and Mr. Larkins contrived, with some difficulty, to get past the two gentlemen.

"A very valuable set of men these district surgeons," observed Mr. Rochfort, in a low tone; "I do not mean to their patients, for to them of course they are; but to us. They have such a wide experience of the poor that they can give us a vast amount of information. Some of them are communicative enough, and very good people; at which I do not wonder; for he who

can see so much wretchedness, retain his senses, and be a churl, must be a monster indeed."

By this time Mr. Rochfort had ascended the second flight. He knocked at a door, and hearing a faint response, entered, followed by Cecil.

It was a wretched apartment; but it was not the place which first engaged Cecil's attention. An emaciated woman lay upon something which served for a mattress, and which was on the ground in one angle of the room. Two miserable children, between whom there had been, doubtless, a family resemblance, but who were now horribly alike (being of the large family of famine), were standing at the foot of this mattress. And there was an old trunk in one corner of the room. These were all that Cecil saw when he came in, and these were all the room contained. But Mr. Rochfort had drawn the old trunk to the side of the woman, and, seated upon it, was talking to her in a suppressed voice, so that Cecil had an opportunity of pursuing his observations.

This room had once contained a contented and happy couple, who had striven with strenuous will and cheerful hearts to make the best of it. The marks on the wall shewed where the bedposts had once pressed against it. Over the mantelpiece lighter patches of whitewash disclosed that framed prints had once hung there, and under it a stout nail declared that joints of meat had been wont to revolve. There were nails, too, high on the walls, to which lines had been tied for the clothes to dry upon.

Cecil was recalled from his contemplation of this desolate place, by the voice of the woman.

She said, addressing Mr. Rochfort, "Indeed, sir, I think we shall do very well now. Your kindness to me and mine has been great indeed, and may you be rewarded for it! The children have had a good dinner, and George—my husband—sir, is gone to get out his tools, and there is some chance of his getting into work again. What should we have done but for you?—oh, sir!"

"Nonsense, my good woman," said Mr. Rochfort, kindly, for she had begun to weep. "I only wish I had heard of you sooner. I must leave you now ; but you have my card. Should your husband not succeed in getting employment, let him call upon me at once, for I know a great many people. No delay, mind. I fear he is a little too proud."

"Why, sir, we ought to have our little pride, or what should we be?" began the woman ; but at this instant the door opened, and the husband entered the room.

He did not seem so much surprised as confused at the sight of strangers ; but he made an awkward and constrained bow, and went and put the basket he was carrying on the ground in a corner.

"Father," cried the woman, "this is the gentleman who has done so much for us."

At this the man stepped forward. "I am sure, sir," he said, "I feel—at least I'm very thankful—you know what I mean, sir."



"I do, I do," said Mr. Rochfort, "without any more words." But the man was now by the side of his wife, asking, "Mother," as he called her, how she was by this time; while his children's hands were tightly clasped upon his knee.

"She's better now, sir, and will recover, the doctor tells her," said the man, "and the children have been brought through."

"They're all right now," observed Mr. Rochfort. "Good day! I've told your wife what I hope you'll attend to."

The man hastened to the door and opened it. "I ought to say more, sir," he said, in a hesitating tone, "but I'm a poor hand at words, somehow. Howsoever, I thank you, I thank you, sir."

"Yes, yes. But have you got into work?" asked Mr. Rochfort.

The man's face brightened. "I shall do in a day or two, I hope and trust. I have got a promise from a gentleman whose word's his bond. God bless you, sir; God bless you!" he added,

calling after Mr. Rochfort, who was descending the stairs.

"That fellow has feeling which he does not like to shew," observed Mr. Rochfort when they got into the street.

"A little uncouth," observed Cecil.

"Perhaps so ; but it's somewhat perplexing to face a man who has, as it were, forced his charity upon you. A good man, I have no doubt—I could see honesty and virtue in every lineament of his countenance. And the woman, too—how I liked that—'we *should* have our little pride !' To be sure we should. Why, Cecil, that man had sold and pawned everything in the world, and would have seen his wife and children on the verge of starvation, rather than that they should go into the Work-house."

"But was not that excessively foolish and sinful ?" asked Cecil.

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Rochfort ; "something more of Roman virtue than Christian

resignation in it, I grant. But spite of the folly and the sin, one can hardly withhold one's respect from the feeling. What! are we of the higher class the only creatures privileged to walk upon stilts? There are many of our good Englishmen who connect the Workhouse with disgrace and dishonour, and who do not at all like being beholden to bounty. How the man we have just left shrank under the sense of obligation!"

"That feeling is not so general in the country," observed Cecil.

"It is not," replied Mr. Rochfort. "There is the sense of dependence *there*, or reciprocal duties between lord and labourer—protection for service as well as wages. But that is not understood by the operative and his master, because it never existed. This man's master had died, and his business died with him. The poor fellow had been out of work a long time, and had no one to look to."

"I would willingly have contributed my

mite," observed Cecil, "only that I knew you had done all that was necessary."

"Keep your mite for a like occasion; it is not wanted in this case," exclaimed Mr. Rochfort. "But I am glad you went with me. It is not well to make a display of acts of this kind; but I disapprove the doctrine of 'doing good by stealth.' Example goes a great way. You want no incitement to serve your fellow-creatures, my dear Cecil, I know," he added; "but a man should be familiar with want—intimate with it—not in its every-day, out-of-door aspect, where it looks part of the system of things, but within the fearful dwellings of courts and alleys; and then if he has a heart it will expand, and if he has a purse it will be opened. But here we are at home; and now to dinner."

Cecil was somewhat astonished to perceive that his friend's apartments were no better than his own. Mr. Rochfort probably guessed his surprise, for he said, "You wonder to see me

in such a place as this ; but the truth is, I do not mean to commence house-keeping till I get a wife, and a wife I cannot take till I have got through a vast many things I have now on hand. What is the profit of maintaining an expensive establishment which is of little or no use to a man ? To-morrow I may go I know not whither, and from thence to Nova Zembla or the Marquisas.

“ What ! have you not then completed your travels ? ” asked Cecil.

“ Out of my own country, I think, for the present,” answered Mr. Rochfort; “ but England, in its commercial and social relations, is enormously interesting just now ; and it is important to come at the root of those matters.”

“ I did not know that you paid much attention to such subjects,” observed Cecil.

“ Nor *did* I, until lately, when I discovered that all the rest of my countrymen were putting themselves in the way of knowing more than myself,” replied Mr. Rochfort.

After dinner, when they had retired to a smaller but cooler apartment, and had taken comfortable possession of easy chairs, Mr. Rochfort remarked: "I made the acquaintance of your friend Neville a short time since."

"Then you know a very clever, and, I believe, in the main, a very worthy personage," answered Cecil.

"Yes; but what a wretched life he leads."

"How! wretched? I don't know a man who takes things more easily than Neville."

"That is the worst of it," cried Mr. Rochfort. "While happiness is the pursuit of us all, it is astonishing how many will contentedly put up with a mere mockery of it. True happiness is the reward of some useful exertion, which he candidly told me he never made in his life. He does not seem to know—or rather, he is resolved to forget—that he has any duties in life to fulfil, and Mrs. Neville is exactly like her husband."

"Do not attack her, she is very amiable and

amusing ; and he fulfils his fate, I suppose he would tell you," observed Cecil.

"By the bye," said Mr. Rochfort, "he was reminding me that you once had an ambition to sit in Parliament."

"I had, and still have ; but circumstances have lately occurred—"

"I know all about that, my dear Cecil ; and I am not going to insult you by sympathizing with your father—

——— 'for he knows the charms  
That set men on such gentle acts as these ;'

and he has his reward in his own breast. But should a vacancy occur, you might be sure of Westbrook without spending a farthing."

"It is possible," said Cecil, musing.

"You have, I suppose, prepared yourself for becoming a worthy representative of the people ?" asked Mr. Rochfort.

"I have studied the laws and constitution of my country."

"No doubt, or if you had not, a course of

my friend Simpson's lectures would soon perfect you in that line," exclaimed Mr. Rochfort, laughing. "But how seldom do purely constitutional questions come before the House of Commons. You would carry out your father's opinions?"

"Of course," said Cecil, promptly.

"But the man who intends to be distinguished should know well what is good for his country, or he will make no way within or without the walls of St. Stephen's."

"That is very true, and it is more so now than ever," replied Cecil, thoughtfully.

"You are right," said Mr. Rochfort, with animation. "More so now than ever. But we won't talk of these matters to-night, for I shan't bore you with politics. But depend upon it, Cecil, a man must think long and well before he presumes to call himself a legislator. Practical men, men of business, men who know something, are the men who are listened to with respect now-a-days."



"I can easily understand," remarked Cecil, "that as England advances in commerce, and as other countries become more commercial, practical business-questions will chiefly engage the attention of the Legislature, and that he will be the most regarded who has the most knowledge and made the deepest research in these matters."

"So entirely am I convinced of this," said Mr. Rochfort, "that, expecting as I do to address a liberal and enlightened constituency in less than a twelvemonth,—I am doing my best to be in a position to answer every imaginable question that may be submitted to me by the most acute and catechising elector."

"Upon my word, Mr. Rochfort," exclaimed Cecil, "this is greatly to your credit."

"Thank you," said his companion, with a smile. "I suppose now, you thought when we called upon the poor fellow this afternoon, that I was a very benevolent creature, and all that. No, Cecil. I hope no honest fellow will ever

perish while I know it and have a guinea or two in my pocket ; but the charity was subsidiary. I go everywhere—cheap lectures and concerts, tea-meetings, and public meetings, —at all these am I to be found, and at these I see the habits, and learn the wants and wishes, wise and unwise, of the people. It's a glorious life, and does a man good, mentally, morally, and physically. I wish you would try it."

"I think I will," said Cecil ; and as he walked slowly homeward that evening, he regretted more deeply than ever that his present circumstances would prevent his becoming member for Westbrook—the one great desire of his youth ; the only thing (as he now believed) wanting to complete his happiness.

## CHAPTER IX.

There is a creature who has all the organs of speech, a tolerable good capacity for conceiving what is said to it : together with a pretty proper behaviour in all the occurrences of common life, but naturally very vacant of thought in itself ; and, therefore, forced to apply itself to foreign assistances.

SIR RICHARD STEELE.

ABOUT a week after Cecil's meeting with Mr. Rochfort, he received a note from that gentleman inviting him to dine with him on the following day. "I want you to meet Richard Simpson," said the writer ; "he is an original, and you ought to see him, for such characters furnish food for reflection. I feel an interest in this man, although I cannot precisely tell wherefore I should do so. I have

not yet been able to make him out, but he has thawed considerably within the last few days. Come."

Cecil went accordingly, and was introduced to Mr. Richard Simpson, who had arrived before him. He was a tall thin man, about thirty years of age, with very light hair, and very blue spectacles.

"Dinner passed off quietly; and it was not until the servants had some time disappeared, that Mr. Simpson suddenly looked up with a smile of contentment, observing Cecil as if anxious to know more of him.

This was a hint that he was ready to enter into conversation, of which Cecil did not neglect to avail himself.

"My friend Rochfort tells me," he said, "that you have been lately delivering lectures on the British Constitution. You find it a congenial pursuit, I dare say. It must be gratifying to impress one's convictions, one's mind, upon a large audience. Do you find that the

people at large take a deep interest in the subject of your lectures?"

"Why, sir, I cannot with truth say that I do," returned Mr. Richard Simpson. "The fact is, circumstances compelled me to do something, and a friend, whose advice, by the way, has not always been beneficial to me, determined me to this pursuit. My friend told me that the British Constitution would furnish a good, because a popular, theme, and I took it."

"But you were previously conversant with the subject?" asked Mr. Rochfort. "You had studied its principles?"

"To be candid with you, I had not," replied Mr. Simpson; "and even now I cannot say that I have a very clear notion of the matter."

"You surprise me, indeed," said Cecil.

"But is there cause for surprise?" asked Mr. Simpson, pushing his blue spectacles on to his forehead. "Is there cause for surprise? I have read a great deal about the British Constitution,

and know very well what it is upon paper, but when I see the working of some of its machinery, I say to myself, what, in the name of Delolme, can be the meaning of this? It is as though a man should say, 'Here is a loom, indeed! Observe it, if you love me. See what a splendid piece of figured brocade I shall presently weave,' and then, sir, offer me a hop-sack as a specimen of the fabrick."

Mr. Rochfort and his friend laughed heartily.

"Then the British Constitution is not altogether to your mind, after all," said the former.

"Why, sir," returned Mr. Simpson, "it is a very good theme for the lecture-room. Very few know what the British Constitution is, and very many entertain a confirmed belief that it is something most glorious, so that there is scarcely a topic that can be named, which permits you so often to lift up your hands and eyes and soar into undetected flights."

"You have hinted something to me to the same effect before," said Mr. Rochfort, and

also that you had learned many things by painful experience. I hope you have not so suffered as to make the recital of your misfortunes painful to you."

"By no means," replied Mr. Simpson, instantly; then adding after a moment's pause, "what man was ever reluctant to disclose woes which had not been drawn upon him by his own vices or criminality? Besides, sir, your kindness to me. — I take your hint, and will say nothing upon that point. But, in a word, I shall not require pressing, if you ask me to give you a sketch of my life."

"I shall be delighted to hear it," cried Mr. Rochfort.

"And I," said Cecil.

Mr. Simpson drew down his spectacles, and after reflecting for some minutes, thus began:—

"My father was an extensive tradesman in this metropolis, who having a steady business, and being a prudent man, amassed a considerable sum of money. My mother had died a few

years after I was born, and I was an only son. My father had a great affection for me, and thought he could not do too much for his child, and when boys have what they want, they get a good deal. But the dear old man denied me nothing so long as I promised—which, of course, I was not slow to do—that I would earnestly and thoroughly endeavour to make myself a gentleman. At the fitting period I was withdrawn from a classical school in the vicinity of this city, and was sent to college; but I did not remain there more than six months, for my old father fell ill and died, leaving me fifteen thousand pounds, with a solemn injunction to remember what he had so often impressed upon me, and to be a gentleman.

“The incessant exhortations of my departed parent had had their effect upon me in my boyhood; and now that I was a man with fifteen thousand pounds in the funds, I was not indisposed to shew that I had profited by them.

“Amongst my friends was one who seemed



to have been born for the express purpose of taking care that I should fully carry out my father's intentions. His name was Beaumont, and he was excessively proud of his name and his family. I am certain he must have had a sincere regard for me, or he never would have urged upon me the course I am about to detail to you.

"He called upon me one day at my father's old house, for I was living there until I could get a tenant for it. After some conversation, tending to the point upon which he had come to me, he said to me,

" 'Simpson, you must leave this house. It's beneath you. You must begin to make a figure in the world.'

" 'There's plenty of time for that,' said I.

" 'Nonsense! You cannot begin too soon.'

"The first thing to be done was to take a fine house at this end of the town (my father had carried on business in the East), which I did,

and to furnish it in style, which I prepared to do.

“One day, seeing a piece of carpet hanging at a door with a catalogue appended to it, I walked in and found the sale in brisk progress. A very handsome set of drawing-room chairs captivated my eye, and when they were put up I began to bid for them. They were eventually knocked down to me, but not until after a stubborn strife with a lady behind me, who asserted that she was the purchaser.

“As soon as the hammer descended, I was touched on the shoulder; and turning round found it to be the lady,—‘You must let me have those chairs, sir,’ she said; ‘you must—I’ve set my heart upon them.’

“I was expostulating with her, when Beaumont made his way through the crowd, and exclaimed, shaking the lady by the hand,—

“‘Mrs. Perkins, I’m delighted to see you

looking so well. Simpson, I was not aware you knew Mrs. Perkins. You did not ? Then let me introduce you.' And he did so.

" 'Your friend Mr. Simpson,' said Mrs. Perkins, 'has behaved very handsomely : he has let me have a set of chairs that were knocked down to him. Won't you both come and dine with us on Tuesday ?'

" We expressed the pleasure it would afford us, and took our leave.

" 'I am glad beyond everything,' said Beaumont, when we had got into the street, 'that you have made the acquaintance of Mrs. Perkins. I was thinking how I could manage to introduce you. Old Perkins is both sensible and rich ; and he has one daughter, a very pretty girl.'

" We went on the appointed Tuesday, and were very hospitably entertained. Mr. Perkins was a very quiet old gentleman : his wife was a good-natured sort of lady, and Miss Charlotte Perkins was a girl with a very pleasing

countenance, but apparently of a reserved disposition.

“From that day forth, I visited there constantly; was studious to enliven the old gentleman. When music was the order of the evening, I hung over the piano with commendable fixedness, and stared at the notes firmly.

“This went on for some time, until, indeed, whenever I entered the room, Mr. Perkins, after shaking me by the hand, looked archly at his wife, when the good lady would smile significantly, and shake her finger at me. She was at length very plain with me.

“I cannot say that the daughter ever gave me anything that I could construe into encouragement, but young ladies are inexplicable beings, and she might really like me very much without in the least shewing it.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Cecil, interrupting; “but do you really think young ladies can so entirely conceal their sentiments? Are they ever so untruthful?”

"Untruthful, Cecil! no, not exactly untruthful!" exclaimed Mr. Rochfort; "but their education encourages a false reserve and refinement which is likely to produce that effect."

"Do not blame refinement, Rochfort," replied Cecil, seriously; "when it is that which elevates the mind of man, and produces every thing which lends to good society its charm. But we interrupt Mr. Simpson; he affirms, that young ladies act differently to what they think."

"I do, Mr. Mulgrave," replied Mr. Simpson.

"I am anxious to hear your story, which will probably confirm your view of the case," remarked Cecil.

"You *shall* hear, sir," quietly returned Mr. Simpson; "I went down upon the day agreed upon, was hailed with true English heartiness, and was introduced to Mr. Crampton, the brother of Mr. Perkins, who had come to reside permanently with them. He was reputed rich, and it was whispered he intended to leave his property to his niece, of whom he was very fond.

“ Mr. Crampton was one of the most extraordinary looking gentlemen I ever saw in my life. He had an enormous head, and a mouth of excessive width, and he was so unsettled that he was for ever wandering about from one room to another.

“ I should have passed a very pleasant fortnight, I have no doubt, but for this man. The house was old-fashioned, but commodious and nicely situated, and Mr. Perkins lived in a very comfortable style. This Mr. Crampton, however, spoiled everything. He was constantly saying ill-natured things; and whenever a pleasing or tender sentiment was uttered, he would mock at it, and endeavour to turn it into ridicule. He seemed to have conceived an especial antipathy to me. I was always exceedingly diffident, especially in the presence of ladies; and whenever I did seek to enter into conversation with his niece, he was sure to stalk into the room, and hover about us with the utmost pertinacity.

“ Meanwhile, the reserve of Miss Perkins increased daily. At this I was seriously perplexed. Whether I ought to attribute this behaviour to indifference I could not divine.

“ One day, Mr. Crampton who had, I felt, been observing me for some time with ill-bred intensity, made a long step towards me, and whispered me, ‘ You won’t succeed—I know you won’t succeed.’

“ I was astonished, and replied with indignation to what I considered great impertinence. ‘ And why not, sir, and why not ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ You don’t make yourself agreeable to her,’ he pursued ; ‘ you don’t talk to her, you don’t flatter her.’

“ I was indignant and left him, and he did not again recur to the subject.

“ And now my fortnight would be over on the following day, and as yet I had made no declaration. Miss Perkins had appeared very serious all the morning, and in a state of mental disturbance for which I could not account. She

wandered hither and thither, went and sat down in one room, and came and sat down in another, went up to her own chamber several times ; and towards the afternoon declared the heat was oppressive, and wanted us all to retire to the north side of the house ; but Mr. Perkins loved to behold his garden, delighted in walking in the verandah, and would not listen to the proposal. Mrs. Perkins beckoned me into another room.

“ ‘What can be the matter with my girl!’ she said ; ‘I never saw her in such a fidgetty state before. She must be in love : I am certain of it. Now, we know all about your circumstances ; we like you very well ; so the sooner we call you son-in-law the better. Ask her to take a walk with you in the garden ; I’ll take care she shall go, and I’ll make that teasing brother of mine keep out of the way. Follow me in a minute or two.’

“ At Mrs. Perkins’s suggestion I petitioned for a walk with Miss Charlotte.



“The face of the young lady now assumed an appearance of dismay, and that of no ordinary kind; but I, and doubtless her mother, attributed it to a presentiment of the coming declaration. She would have declined; but her mother interfered authoritatively,

“The poor girl—I can even now pity her—was fain to take my offered arm, and we walked through the French window on to the small lawn. I led her two or three times up and down the garden in silence; for I wanted to regain my own composure, and desired also that she might acquire a little. We had walked to the end of the garden for the fourth time, and I was just about to pour forth a flood of tender eloquence, when I was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a young man in the greatest state of agitation, who approached us. A brief explanation on his part acquainted me with the fact that he had long been attached to Miss Perkins, although his sentiments towards her had not been made known to her parents. He

advised me to renounce any further notion of addressing the lady, as the attachment was mutual, and, in fact, that he had now come to claim her hand, having gained the concurrence of a zealous friend in Mr. Crampton. They then left me, and as I turned to fly and communicate the evil tidings, there was Mr. Crampton, at the end of the path, shaking his fist at me with the most mischievous exultation.

“I made my way past him, and ran up the steps through the verandah into the room. Never shall I forget the rage of Mr. Perkins when I related what had occurred.

“At this moment Mr. Crampton tapped me on the shoulder.

“‘Take your hat and go,’ said he, ‘at once. When Mrs. Perkins comes down stairs there will be a violent burst of passion, and you will be the sufferer.’

“‘I! and what have I done?’ I exclaimed.

“‘No matter. She always attacks strangers, in preference to her own people.’

“ ‘I took the hint, and made my escape, and sent for my boxes the following day. I never saw them more.’

“ But, bless me, how late it is ! ” cried Mr. Simpson, suddenly looking at the clock on the mantel-piece. “ I really was not aware ; I must bid you a very good night, and reserve all the detail of my parliamentary adventures and misfortunes for another day,” and Mr. Richard Simpson took his leave rather abruptly.

“ *Parliamentary* adventures and misfortunes ! ” cried Cecil, with a strong emphasis on the word *parliamentary*. “ Is it possible that he has meddled with such a thing ? Is it not enough to have delivered lectures on a Constitution he abuses without knowing about it ; has he really proceeded further ?—Can he have had the presumption ? ”

“ You are indignant, Cecil ; do you already feel inclined to fight with any who are not as great men as you intend to be next session ? ” cried Mr. Rochfort, smiling.

“Do not mock at my defeated hopes,” replied Cecil. “The other day your conversation gave me an exalted view of the duties which would have been mine, and I rejoiced that I had not entered on a public career too young; that I should have yet time to consider the ground-work on which to raise my principles, to mature my thoughts; but when such a conceited man as that—”

“It is well for you to see all sorts of people to know the different species you will be likely to find in the world; but I own I am deceived in this man, I forgave his want of refinement because I thought he had talent, and talent makes us overlook any minute defects, but I find his talent existed only in self-conceit and boasting.”

“That is always the case; the ignorant are always the most conceited,” cried Cecil, eagerly.

“And the selfish usually the least refined. They are too much occupied with their own projects to have time to consider the weak-

nesses, the fancies, the prejudices of those with whom they associate, and must fail to please in society."

"How disagreeable that is: how I hate a person who has no idea when he has said a thing which has annoyed you, and who never studies the character or the circumstances of those people with whom he is conversing," replied Cecil.

"And among such persons who enjoy your dislike, shall I include Mr. Richard Simpson?" inquired his friend.

"Yes," cried Cecil.

"But what do *you* think of Mr. Richard Simpson?" asked Cecil, laughing heartily. "His story was the veriest romance I ever heard."

"I think so, too," said Mr. Rochfort.

"Did he not say, when he began, something about your kindness? I hope you have not lent him anything."

"Merely fifty pounds," said Mr. Rochfort,

looking rather annoyed. "I must make further inquiries about him."

Mr. Rochfort called at the lodgings of Mr. Simpson next morning, but he was gone away, no one knew whither. He had spoken over night about a six o'clock train.

## CHAPTER X.

She is too subtle for thee :

\* \* \* \* \*

And thou wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous  
When she is gone.

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON is, as everybody knows who has once experienced a summer there, very dusty, and the air very oppressive when the thermometer stands at 80° or 90°; and Lord Eastland, feeling languid and unfit for exertion, bethought himself that a day or two in the country would be beneficial to his health, and accordingly he arrived at Bathurst Lodge one Saturday evening, just as Mrs. Ridley and Flora were sallying forth for their daily walk.

The cool breeze from the lake, the refreshing shades of the park, and the delicious perfume of

the new-made hay, enlivened him ; and instead of relapsing into the sullen indifference he usually indulged in at home, he condescended to talk. He could not divest himself of the idea, that Flora, being his daughter, was still a child and unable to speak—for he always forgot that the years which had thinned his once luxuriant locks, and increased his once slight figure into maturer proportions, had likewise passed over *her* head—that as she had grown to woman's height, so had her intellect expanded ; and that, though children neither care to listen nor to talk when subjects are discussed before them which fail to interest them, it is possible that the two or three years which pass over our heads unobserved, change all their tastes and all their habits, and fit them to become in their turn members of society. It is difficult to believe that, while we feel ourselves still as young as ever, the gentle child, whom we carried in our arms—whose opinions, whose actions were entirely under our control—has emulated our



stature, attained to opinions and thoughts and resolutions of its own; that it is a *person*, no longer our toy, our plaything; but our equal, our rival, our competitor in the busy scenes of life. Then it is that the effects of its previous governance are shown: if for hatred, in its burning desire to be free and to escape from all control; if for love, in its still fond reliance on the fostering hand which had hitherto guarded it safely, and to which it still looks for support.

Lord Eastland was one who could not understand this; and, consequently, passing over Flora with the utmost contempt, he addressed all he had to say to Mrs. Ridley, who was usually the object of his utter abhorrence. Flora was less timid than last year: society, although it had received her so coolly, had accustomed her to speak more than she had ever done before, and sometimes she could not refrain from joining in the conversation.

Thus, when Mrs. Ridley, among the gossip of the neighbourhood, informed her father that a

strange gentleman had taken up his abode at a farm-house, and was employed in walking all day over the country; coming to the Lodge whenever it was shown; examining everything most minutely, and worrying the housekeeper with questions, until everybody agreed he must be mad, as he never was seen without a book under his arm; and that the doctor, calling at the farm, had seen one of his books, and had pronounced it to be in a language and character no one could possibly understand, since it was neither Greek nor Latin; she could not help exclaiming, "And, who do you think he is like, papa? so like Mr. Edwardes, the uncle of that young actress at Florence."

She had no sooner said these words than she wished she could recall them; for she remembered the scene in the church, and the fearful alteration of her father's countenance. The same thing occurred now; her sudden words produced a wonderful effect on him, and he murmured, "What can he do here? What can he want here? Never

let me meet him. I have a horror of madmen."

Mrs. Ridley looked amazed : she did not anticipate her news having such a marvellous effect ; and, terrified by Lord Eastland's expression, was for once awed into silence.

Flora was full of conjectures about all that was connected with this marvellous man, and frightened lest Lord Eastland's anger should be turned against her, for having recalled a disagreeable scene to his mind, so the walk ended more silently than it had begun ; and, invigorated by the country air, Lord Eastland returned to London on the following Monday.

He did not again seek to leave it, until Mrs. Mulgrave and Georgina accompanied him to Bathurst Lodge, to remain while Mr. Mulgrave went to Scotland for the grouse shooting. On his arrival, he carelessly asked Flora if the mad stranger had left the village ? and he was informed that he had not ; but he was fortunate enough, during his daily walks and rides with

Georgina, whom he particularly admired, never to meet him, or to see him, except at a distance.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ridley had once encountered him in the park ; and, to gratify her deeply-ingrafted love of talking, had entered into conversation with him, in the course of which she learned that he still called himself Edwardes ; and, inquiring after his niece, she was informed that she was perfectly well, and at that time resident in a distant part of the country. Still she was anxious to know more ; but however skilfully she put her questions, he would tell her nothing else, although he allowed her to discover by chance that he knew a good deal of what went on within the Lodge, and of the family history altogether ; and once he had turned round abruptly and interrupted what she was saying, by inquiring “ Where Lord Eastland’s niece was living ? ”

Mrs. Ridley found that question rather difficult to answer, and prudence suggested to her mind that it would be wiser to retreat in time,

and not again place herself in such a perilous situation.

One or two visitors occasionally came to Bathurst Lodge ; but for the first three or four weeks the party generally included no one but the Mulgraves. It was then that Georgina displayed all her varied accomplishments, passing her mornings in drawing figures, for which, unfortunately, Flora had no taste ; and then followed gentle persuasions from Georgina, hints from Mrs. Ridley, admonitions from Lord Eastland, as to the propriety and expediency of cultivating such a domestic talent.

Flora had a keen perception of the beauties of nature, and a correct eye ; whenever she had been able to obtain permission, in the interval of graver studies, she had sketched ; that is to say, when Mrs. Ridley had not found it too hot or too cold, too damp or too sunny, to accompany her ; but her natural diffidence, and want of proper confidence in her own powers, was so excessive, that she never ventured to exhibit

these rapid attempts, and accordingly they were almost all destroyed. She admired architecture; she felt a reverential admiration for a fine window or curious arched doorway, as she did for a fine picture, a beautiful song, or a graceful statue; but the only specimen she had seen was their own church, which she gazed on with fresh love and pleasure every day, and a small portion of the Lodge, which had survived being modernized, because it was so hidden by trees that no casual observer could see it. From one angle of the school-room window Flora could observe and admire it: and many and many a time had she been scolded for drawing it, instead of attending to her lessons. This, then, she might have attempted; but she was perfectly ignorant of figures—in which style Georgina excelled—perhaps because she had never seen any face which had awakened in her mind a feeling of the beautiful, except Georgina's, and that she did not love sufficiently to think of; Mrs. Ridley's, her maid's, and her

own, were all sufficiently hideous—the last particularly so to Flora—to deter her from attempting them.

So it was pronounced that Flora had no taste for drawing; and she sat by and watched Georgina, wondering at her talent. Her usual occupation was rustic figures, and she had brought with her many copies. Flora often urged her to “attempt a likeness of somebody, she felt certain she would be able to do it so well;” but Georgina declined, and she usually made the sketch in her own room, and contented herself with colouring it in the drawing-room, because she could then be at leisure to talk.

Flora then read; but it was impossible to remember anything, while Georgina and her father kept up such an incessant chattering, and when she attempted to retire to join Mrs. Ridley, she was always called back and told that she should not leave her visitor, but endeavour to amuse her. She was then reduced to work,

which was not agreeable ; and Georgina was for ever lamenting that she must be very much in Flora's way. She felt she interfered with her usual pursuits, and compelled her to the stupid occupation of stitching.

Georgina went out into the garden one morning, and Flora, delighted to be quite at liberty, flew towards the piano, and began to play a favorite air, which however soon had the effect of bringing Georgina in, and her sudden approach made Flora so nervous that she struck a false note ; whereupon her friend, in her blindest manner, informed her that her own musical taste was so perfect, that she could never endure even to hear *herself* practise, and, in order not to torture her delicate organ, she had given up playing altogether.

After a gentle hint like that, what could poor Flora do, but resolve never to be the means of again torturing a perfect ear ; and though Georgina urged her to continue, that she loved to hear her, she rose from her seat, and ap-



proached Miss Mulgrave, who was busy arranging some flowers she had been gathering. She offered to assist her, but Georgina assured her she would rather proceed alone. Lord Eastland entered at that moment, and made some remark about her graceful employment.

"I love flowers," cried Georgina ; "there is nothing I am so fond of ; and yours are indeed beautiful, Lord Eastland. I do not think, dear Flora, you are so absurd about them as I am ; I am awfully extravagant some times. Were you ever guilty of giving half a guinea for a moss rose ?"

"No ! indeed !" replied the amazed Flora.

"No, Flora does not like that sort of thing ; she would never take the trouble you are doing now to adorn the rooms," said Lord Eastland. "But then, unfortunately, she has no taste."

"Still I cannot believe, though she is not very enthusiastic about flowers, that she is totally indifferent to them," said Georgina, in a deprecating tone. "Own, dearest Flora, that

you like them a little, a *very* little. Everybody is fond of flowers. The labourer, on his return from a hard day's work, trains the woodbine that clusters over his porch, ties up his favorite carnation, or counts the double stocks in bloom in his small garden with delight; and in London, to whatever gloomy part you may go, you often see the pet geranium or the balsam carefully placed at the open window to obtain a little sun."

"How true that is!" exclaimed Lord Eastland, in an accent of conviction, as if he had never noticed the circumstance before. "For my part, I consider a person who does not like flowers possesses a vulgar and common mind."

"People must be very strange who do not love to observe their varied forms, their rich and lovely colours," said Flora.

"Flora! do *you* say that?" cried Georgina. "Why, I have never seen you gather one, and your papa tells me you never care to decorate the room with them."

"Yes, Georgina, that may be true," answered Flora. "I certainly would rather see them in the garden than mutilated to adorn a room, only to wither in an hour."

"That is only a subterfuge," exclaimed Lord Eastland. "If you were fond of them, you could not resist the temptation of gathering them."

Flora wondered how she could gather flowers when pursuing her usual walk on the approach, and she yet retained a vivid recollection of the many scoldings she had received as a child for "spoiling his flowers" from the head gardener, a very fine gentleman, seconded by Mrs. Ridley denouncing it as an idle amusement. She had, besides, another reason, which she ventured to express.

"I do not like the smell of many flowers in a room."

"And, pray, why not?" asked her friend.

"They give me a headache."

"My dear, honest Flora!" cried Georgina,

in a mocking tone, "who would have expected to hear such affectation from you? You will emulate the Venetian ladies, who are so morbidly sensitive to perfumes that they faint at the odour of common essences. I shall hear some day of your

'Dying of a rose in aromatic pain.'

"You may laugh, Georgina, but I assure you, too many flowers in a room make me ill."

"Then I no longer wonder at your hating them," cried Georgina.

"I like them much in the open air, and I like to examine their structure," said Flora.

"Oh! if you are turned botanist," cried Georgina, "tell me the name of this lovely thing;" and she playfully arranged a beautiful scarlet flower in her dark hair, where it produced a very good effect.

"I am no florist, Georgina," exclaimed Flora, for once determined to try to compete with her; "it is only wild flowers that I can name, or about which I could tell you much."

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“ If you had a common desire for knowledge, you would ask the gardener the names of the green-house plants, and not live with them all your life and yet know nothing about them,” said Lord Eastland.

“ And taste would, necessarily, lead you to admire these in preference to buttercups and daisies,” continued Georgina.

“ Botanists would call these double flowers monsters, Georgina,” said Flora, smiling, “ and delicate plants, full of the most curious contrivances and of real use to mankind, you would stigmatize as weeds. So various are opinions !”

Georgina was for one moment alarmed by discovering such an unexpected and such a powerful antagonist in Flora, but her good opinion of herself soon reminded her that her friend was far inferior to herself, and since she had Lord Eastland on her side she did not care.

“ Really, Flora, you amaze me ! When did

Mrs. Ridley turn her mind to botany, and since when have you studied it?"

"Mrs. Ridley, if anything, is rather a florist like you," cried Flora; "but she does not care for the science."

"And why do you?" asked Georgina.

"Have not different people different tastes?"

"I am glad to see you take an interest in anything," said Lord Eastland; "I thought you far too indifferent to care to learn, unless you were taught; but do not talk of *taste*; you are lamentably deficient in that."

"Flora is such an odd girl," said Georgina, affectionately, "that she likes nothing in the way other people do, but in a sly manner of her own. You know, Lord Eastland, we were quite mistaken about flowers; she *is* fond of them; perhaps she has a taste of her own in everything."

"You are very flattering, Miss Mulgrave, but she likes nothing at all! She cares neither for heraldry, genealogy, nor architecture, studies

to which ladies of good families generally give some attention."

"Oh, I dote upon them!" exclaimed Georgina; "but then you know it is a peculiar taste. I know the arms of every carriage in the Park; I never forget a name, and a fine house is my especial admiration—or a picturesque church."

Flora thought Georgina very clever, for she certainly understood and liked every subject that could be spoken of; but she felt bound to believe it all, for she remembered when she went out with her, that Georgina always knew whose carriage it was they met a long way off by the colour of the liveries, and in her simplicity Flora thought heraldry must have been a particular assistance to her researches, and that a peculiar talent was required for it, for she found it was a thing she could never recollect herself.

She remembered also that Georgina knew the history and the relations of every individual at

all connected with the fashionable world, so she admitted likewise her taste for genealogy. Architecture was a more difficult subject. Bathurst Lodge had been modernized by the father of the present possessor, and improved by his son, into the style of an Italian villa. Doubtless the loggia, the Corinthian pillars, were very fine, but Flora had the bad taste to prefer the castellated mansion, of which one small portion alone remained. She was Goth enough to think that the marble required the clear blue sky and brilliant sunshine of a southern clime to shew to perfection, and she regretted the thick walls, pointed windows and turrets, of the Gothic age. Georgina, whose idea of a fine house comprehended spacious rooms, plenty of chambers to accommodate visitors, and a fine and numerous establishment, was loud in her praise of the magnificence of Bathurst Lodge, and hesitated not to pronounce it the finest house she had ever seen. She cared little for the exterior if the interior arrangements were what



she liked, and she had never considered the architect in any other light than that of one who builds a house large enough for company, or a smaller London abode. She had never experienced the soothing effect a time-hallowed pile produces on the mind, or known how pleasant a thing it is to mark the lines of beauty and the effect different shades of light produce on an old and magnificent building. She had never imagined that, in gazing on such a one, you seem to imbibe the spirit of the time when it was reared; that thoughts of those days are invested with greater reality, and that beauty, under what ever form presented, must ever be grateful to the eye and to the mind.

Georgina was too indefatigable an actress in the world's busy scene to have time to waste upon thinking, and Flora had had no opportunity to do anything else but think. No wonder they were so totally dissimilar.

Lord Eastland was one of those who best

appreciated all Georgina's extraordinary talents, —perhaps from the total want of them in his daughter,—and it was really touching to perceive how amiably he devoted himself to the entertainment of those guests whom he had invited solely on Flora's account ; but it must have been the source of great grief to him to perceive that, although Georgina most worthily improved every moment, and never allowed a foolish speech or a want of due accomplishment to pass unnoticed in her friend, the ungracious Flora had not become at all like her amiable monitress, and that, on the contrary, the more she knew of her the less she appeared to like her.

Mrs. Mulgrave was not well the whole time of her visit ; so, when Lord Eastland had been reluctantly summoned to London on business, the driving party was reduced to the two girls and Mrs. Ridley.

“ Is there nothing we can go to see ; is there nothing we can do to pass this long day of

your father's absence, Flora?" asked Georgina, almost peevishly.

"You have seen everything within driving distance, Georgina, I think," answered Flora; "but I do not know for certain, because it was all as new to me as to you: I had never been beyond the park."

"There is Lord X——'s place in this county," cried Georgina; "I had forgotten it; and I remember once hearing that the park is beautiful."

"But he is a strange man, and will allow no one to go into it," said Flora.

"Not if we said who we are?"

"Not even then."

"I think we might attempt it; perhaps we shall succeed; we may be more fortunate than other people. I wish I could see Lord X——; I think I could persuade him to admit us. I generally gain any point I wish to carry," exclaimed Georgina, laughing.

"You will see nothing except what you can discover by peeping over the park palings,"

answered Flora ; but Georgina was determined, and they went.

The drive was through a very beautiful country, and Flora enjoyed it excessively ; but Georgina appeared bored, and was very anxious to arrive at her journey's end ; but when they did, no entreaty could persuade an old man, to whom the charge of the gate was committed, to allow them even to peep into it, though Georgina informed him she knew Lord X—— well.

“ Nobody ever came to the castle by this gate, so you can't be wanting to see my lord or the family,” was all the answer she could obtain.

On re-entering the carriage, Flora asked where they should go next, and Georgina desired the servant to go to any other gate. “ We are sure to reach the right one at last,” she remarked.

“ You are very sanguine, Georgina,” was all her friend could say ; while Mrs. Ridley, no wise pleased to be driving about the country,

and in danger of losing her luncheon on Miss Mulgrave's account, kept silence.

They now perceived a village, and there they drove ; Georgina examining and cross-examining every one they met, as to the possibility of seeing the park.

She was continually told that there was no foot-path—no stile ; that visitors could be admitted only by tickets, and never when the family was there ; for it appeared that Lord X—— was one of those who love to enjoy alone, and who have the power as well as the wish to exclude every one from participating in the beauty of their own private property. And beautiful it certainly was, from the glimpses Georgina and her party occasionally obtained.

Richly verdant forest-glades ; hills covered with magnificent beech-woods, through which the red deer ran wild ; thickets of luxuriant fern, and smooth grassy banks watered by a winding river—it was difficult to imagine a more lovely spot ; and in the centre, remote from any impertinent stranger's eye, the castle,

with the banner of its lords scarcely waving in the slight breeze, stood in proud and dignified solitude. The very inaccessibility of this mansion gave fresh zest to Miss Mulgrave's efforts, and she reached at last another gate, which an old woman was shutting after a cart.

"Stop, my good woman, we are coming through," exclaimed Georgina, "I hope to find Lord X—— well."

"He is better, thank you, madam," was the old woman's reply, as she stood with the gate in her hand. Then it suddenly appeared to her that this was not the shortest way to the house—that they could not be visitors.

"It is a beautiful place," said she, turning to Mrs. Ridley; "have you often been here?"

"Never before," said Mrs. Ridley.

"I guessed as much, and though ye are very nice ladies, I could not admit you for the world, it would be as much as my place is worth. My lord is a very particular gentleman, and he would never forgive it."

"What a fool Mrs. Ridley is," whispered Georgina to Flora, "she has not the sense of

a child ;” and Flora, alarmed at such heretical words applied to such an awful personage as Mrs. Ridley, did not reply, but withdrew to a little distance.

“ Now, my good woman,” continued Georgina, “ this is all very right of you, but it can do no harm to allow us just to take a peep at the castle from this side ; we shall not fall in Lord X——’s way ; and if you are obliging, depend upon it we shall never breathe a word of this adventure.”

“ It is against my lord’s orders,” was the old woman’s reply.

“ But we are neighbours and friends, and Lord X—— will be angry if you disoblige us,” said Georgina.

“ If you were friends, you would know that my lord is just gone to town,” continued the gate-keeper.

“ Not at all, for we come from a distance ; but Lady X——, the young ladies, or Mr. X—— are at home ?”

“ Yes, madam, so they are ; but I know you come to see the park, and not them. I sup-

pose you know the castle's never shewn to anybody, and though the park is fine, the red deer are very wild, particularly at this season."

"I defy all the red deer in the kingdom!" exclaimed Georgina; "come, come, let us in; we will not stay long."

"I do not like to be cruel to ye, ladies, if ye have come a long distance to see a beautiful sight, but I dare not; however, if you will only go as far as that oak-tree, where you can have a good view of the house, I will let you in," said the kind old creature opening the gate.

Flora followed, and exclaimed, "Oh! Georgina, how could you induce her to disobey orders? It is very wrong, indeed it is."

"Because I am not quite such a frightened goose as you are," replied Miss Mulgrave, contemptuously.

Flora still followed her, expostulating, when she suddenly perceived that Mrs. Ridley was not near them, and turned to look for her. She saw her at some distance behind, talking to a gentleman, whom Flora soon recognised as Mr. Edwardes.



"Who is that man Mrs. Ridley has picked up now—Lord X——?" asked Georgina.

"No! It is the stranger, who is living at a farm near us, and who reads unreadable books. You must have heard of him, Georgina?"

"Yes; I remember your father speaking of him; but is he mad, will he hurt us?"

"Oh, no, he is not in the least mad, only odd," cried Flora.

Mrs. Ridley now joined them, and explained how delighted she had been to perceive Mr. Edwardes, and how she had persuaded the old woman to admit him too, for she was so dreadfully afraid of the red deer. Georgina spoke to him in her most gracious manner, and seemed to think his presence a great addition to their small party.

They reached the oak, and the view certainly exceeded their expectations; it was so vast, so wild, so lovely.

Georgina was not disposed to admire it long. "That is a pretty romantic path to the left, and that road through the forest is beautiful;

this before us leads to the castle ; which should we attempt ?”

“ Oh ! Georgina, are you not going back now ? This is the oak to which she allowed us to come,” cried Flora.

“ Going back ? Who would dream of such a thing, now we are once inside ?”

“ You *promised*, remember,” said Flora.

“ Promises are only made to be broken, are they, Miss Mulgrave ?” asked Mr. Edwardes, fixing his piercing eyes upon her countenance.

Georgina could not tell if he were agreeing with her, or laughing at her, but she chose to imagine the former, and she answered. “ Only for that : as you are so long debating, let us go through the wood.”

“ Pray go back, Georgina !” exclaimed Flora, in an accent of supplication, “ suppose the woman were to lose her place through us.”

“ It is her own fault. Why did she let us in ?” answered Georgina.

“ How very unjust !” murmured Flora.

Mrs. Ridley was perfectly passive. She had prudently secured a defender in case the red

deer chose to attack her, and now she was secure from them, her chief reason for venturing to disagree from Miss Mulgrave was removed. They walked on. Georgina exerted herself to appear to advantage in Mr. Edwardes's eyes, in the absence of any better person to please, and he seemed to seek to draw out her opinions, and to persuade her to converse freely ; but occasionally a word escaped him, or she caught an expression on his face, which made her doubt if he entirely admired her.

They wandered through a beautiful wood, appearing more luxuriant and rich from its gorgeous autumnal tints ; and, at any other time, Flora's heart would have been open to delight ; but now she felt uncomfortable, when she considered the dishonorable way in which they had obtained admittance.

A sudden turn in the road discovered to them some equestrians, who were advancing towards them.

"There is Lady X——, Georgina ; how angry she will be when she sees us."

"Do not be absurd, Flora. It cannot concern you ; she will not be so uncourteous as to turn us out by force. She will consider it nearer for us to get out this way, than to retrace our steps."

"But, Georgina, the kind old woman."

"The kind old woman has bewitched you, I think !" exclaimed Miss Mulgrave. "We are not near her. She must answer for herself."

"But we could tell Lady X—— ; we could say it was our fault, that we insisted on getting in, that the old woman was not to blame ; and if we told who we are, and said we were sorry——"

"Like little penitent children coming out of the corner," cried Georgina, sarcastically ; "upon my word, Flora, you are a greater goose than I took you for."

"Because I am so sorry ; if you will not tell Lady X——, I will," exclaimed Flora, hastening on.

Georgina seized her dress, and drew her back. "For heaven's sake, do not expose yourself ! How do you know it is Lady X—— ; and

if it is, she will think you monstrously impertinent."

"If we do not speak, we must write when we get home, and explain all, and tell our real names."

"And get your particular friend into disgrace! That would be more absurd than ever. Lord X—— would think it a polite way of complaining of his servant, and send her off directly," continued Georgina.

Poor Flora looked blank at these words; it was a view of the case she had never taken; and she suffered the riding party to pass her without speaking.

As they did so, she heard one of them say, "I wonder where this road leads?"

"Do you perceive, Flora, that I have fortunately saved you from committing an act of manifest folly?" cried Georgina, triumphantly; "they do not belong to the house, or they would know their way about the park; they are adventurers like ourselves."

"But perhaps they had permission given them to come in," cried Flora.

"Which permission *we* gave ourselves," said Georgina; "that is all the difference."

Flora would not argue with her; but she felt ashamed of their adventure, and she settled in her own mind that there was no pleasure in doing anything secretly.

The deer were feeding quietly at a distance, and not one lifted up its head to observe the wanderers, although the dry withered leaves rustled and the dead fern crackled beneath their feet. Georgina was beginning to feel tired, and they were now so far in the woods as to be unable to tell in what direction they should proceed to get out again.

A broader road than usual attracted the attention of Georgina, and she persuaded them to follow it: she was sure it led to a Lodge. After a weary half mile they arrived at a gate which was locked, and over which it was impossible to climb. "We must go back again!" cried Georgina; "how very fatiguing! I am half dead already, Flora! You should not have said this was a pretty road, and have induced me to try it."

Flora had not said a word on the subject, and she was going to answer, when she perceived such a strange expression of contempt and pity on Mr. Edwardes's countenance as he was observing Georgina, that she could not help looking at him ; but Miss Mulgrave never saw it ; she felt always so certain that everybody must admire her, that she never contemplated the possibility of their not doing so. She therefore continued chattering and laughing with him ; for she was one of those who despise the society of women, "there was so much more variety and interest in talking to men."

It was fortunate for Mrs. Ridley and for Flora that Mr. Edwardes was now with them ; had he not been so, Georgina must have amused herself by complaining to and scolding them : as it was, he was so entertaining that she forgot the distance ; and we think that, had Lord Eastland perceived her gentle smiles, her affable manner, he would perhaps have felt a little jealous of the black wig.

Georgina now forsook the beaten path and plunged into the woods, to the infinite horror of

Mrs Ridley, who expected to be taken up as a poacher, or caught in a trap. Pheasants started from their covert at her feet with their loud whirring noise, alarming her woefully; timid hares raced across her path, and once she heard the distant report of a gun, when she gave herself up for lost, and in her agony exclaimed to her pupil, "Dear Flora, what have I done to die such a death as this! If you survive, remember all I have told you for so many years."

They arrived at a swamp, in which Mrs. Ridley lost one of her galoshes, and then crept through a hole under the palings, and forced their way through a small hedge, when they fortunately perceived a cottage, just as the evening was closing in; and after many entreaties persuaded a woman, who was undressing her baby, to unlock the gate and let them out; "for," as Mr. Edwardes told her, "it would be barbarous to allow them to die of hunger in the woods for so slight an offence as gratifying curiosity;" and the woman was so kind, that she left the undressed infant on the floor, regardless



of its screams, in her anxiety to set them free after all their perils and their hardships.

They had half an hour's walk before they reached the carriage; and as Mr. Edwardes left them to walk home, which he informed them he preferred, he said to Georgina, "I hope you may always get as easily free from every perilous adventure in which you may be engaged."

Georgina did not quite know if these words were intended in a complimentary sense: she did not quite like the expression of his countenance; and Flora felt she should have disliked such words addressed to herself.

Lord Eastland returned on the following day, and Georgina forgot all about her new acquaintance, and went on exactly as before.

## CHAPTER XI.

I am conqueror of myself.

SHAKSPEARE.

FLORA's fear and indolence were both forsaking her. She felt so angry with Georgina that she could no longer sit by and hear her remarks with patience. She had grown even to dislike the sound of her voice, and would fly anywhere to escape from it.

Georgina had the talent of discovering the slightest imperfection in her friend, and using the privilege of friendship to make a good-natured observation, or a jesting remark, which, unfortunately, had generally the effect of opening Lord Eastland's eyes to his daughter's defects ; or of causing some comment from Mrs. Ridley, as to what well-educated young ladies should, or should not be.

No one was better aware of her own faults than Flora ; indeed, she must have been deaf, had she not acquired a thorough knowledge of them, for the family conversation at Bathurst Lodge rarely included any other topic ; but she could not endure Georgina to notice them.

It had been difficult to be angry with her at first, and Flora had often blamed herself for feeling annoyed, when Georgina drew her arm within hers, and gently suggested that she did not know that new music her father had brought from town, or, embracing her, placed her dazzlingly beautiful complexion in contact with Flora's rosy cheeks, and wished she could steal a little of her bloom, that she might not look so delicate.

Flora never felt safe or free ; it was becoming impossible to her to avoid replying angrily to Georgina's coaxing words, and her thoughts were employed, night and day, in picturing to herself the joy with which she should hail her visitor's departure.

"How very strange," exclaimed Georgina to her mother, one morning at breakfast, "the

Campbells have taken Westbrook, so you may still have an opportunity of seeing it, I hear, though my uncle and aunt no longer live there."

"I hope there is little chance of *my* seeing it," replied Flora. "I should not like to go there, now that Lady Beverstone has been forced to leave it."

"You are very romantic in your affection for my aunt," replied Georgina. "I shall begin to be jealous of her; I fear she will steal all your love away from me. When are you to go to see her, Flora? I fancied you were to visit her early in the autumn, and this is already September."

"She has left Westbrook, Georgina," said Flora, in a tone of astonishment.

"But that will make no difference to you. I thought you cared to see her only, not for her house or company, and it can scarcely be duller at Hawthorn Cottage, than it used to be at Westbrook."

"If she would ask me, I should be delighted to go to her anywhere; more than ever now,

when she is unhappy, and I might be a companion to her, and help to amuse her."

"How disinterested you are, dear Flora," said Georgina, in her gentlest, tenderest manner, "to be ready to leave your home, to comfort the unhappy."

"Yes, to leave home, to be with her," said Flora, bitterly, for she thought home consisted more in the people than in the place, and at Hawthorn Cottage she would be welcomed by one whom she loved deeply, for whom she felt the greatest admiration, and whom she had learned to consider almost in the light of a mother.

In Flora's bosom there was a yearning for some being in whom to repose confidence—for some person whom she could esteem, and whose advice she could implicitly follow, and this person she had found in Lady Beverstone.

After years of isolation, how pleasant to find there is one you can trust, and Flora loved and confided in her as a parent—as one doubly precious from having been sighed for so long before discovered, and found only to be lost again.

All the long repressed affection of her young heart, all the gratitude a generous nature is capable of feeling, all the enthusiastic devotion to goodness, which forms part of the creed of the young, were lavished by her on her friend.

Many bitter tears she had shed over Lady Beverstone's loss of fortune, since it must diminish the extent of her secret charities, and cause many a severe pang to her sympathetic heart. She had learned to look upon their separation as a thing that must be, and had grieved much about it, when Georgina's words unconsciously re-awakened hope. If she could be of service to Lady Beverstone, how happy she should be; she would write, and offer herself, and thus escape this present disagreeable existence. She would not scruple to tell her the whole truth, for although Georgina was her niece, she was not blind to her faults. She would write, exactly, every thought as it arose in her mind, and Lady Beverstone was too kind to refuse to invite her, after so detailed an account of her miseries.

But how and when to write? She was never

alone a moment, and Mrs. Ridley insisted on seeing every letter she wrote, even to Lady Beverstone.

How could she deceive her? She could write at night, but the candle was always taken away as soon as she was in bed, and at dressing times Mary was always there, and all day was trotting in and out every instant.

What a world of comfort, of enjoyment, is comprised in the word *alone*! To shut the door upon the outer world, and live quietly for a little while with our own thoughts. How charming!

It was a pleasure poor Flora had never known.

She waited impatiently for bedtime; but, alas, her fire was gone out, and it was impossible to write in the dark; thus she lost a whole day.

On the two following evenings she was more successful, and on her knees, on the hearth-rug, by the flickering light of a dying fire, she penned a most eloquent appeal to Lady Bever-

stone's generosity. Her name had only to be signed, and the letter to be sealed and directed, but the fire was too low for that, and she durst not poke it, for fear of exciting attention. She waited, therefore, another day. And now it was finished, the next difficulty was how to send it. Somebody would be sure to see her, if she put it in the letter-box, and she had no one to despatch to the neighbouring town, when, fortunately, Georgina and her father went out to ride; Mrs. Mulgrave and Mrs. Ridley accompanied them in the pony-carriage, advising Flora, who had a bad cold, to walk for half-an-hour on the terrace, instead of driving.

Flora watched them depart with great satisfaction, and then immediately took her letter in her hand, went out on the terrace and through the kitchen-garden into the park, intending to give the first child she met sixpence to carry the letter to the post-office.

Every breath of air made her shudder; she fancied the carriage or the riding party was returning; every old stump took the shape of



some one likely to discover her scheme. She reached a gate opening on the high road, and there took up her post of observation.

She waited, in great anxiety, ten minutes. It was strange nobody should pass to-day on a road usually so well frequented.

Hark! is not that a footstep? It is a man's, however, and Flora shrinks back. It is that strange Mr. Edwardes, who behaved in such an odd way to Georgina the other day, that man who says the strangest things—he is actually coming through the gate. Flora hides behind a bush, but his sharp eyes discover her.

“Good morning, Lady Flora, are you playing at hide-and-seek with me?”

Flora, thus forced from her concealment, came forward as unconcernedly, as she could.

“May I venture to ask, what made you hide from me?” he continued. “I will not tell of your being so far from home.”

“I do not care, if you do,” murmured Flora, provoked at this unlucky meeting.

“Are you perfectly *true* in what you say?”

exclaimed Mr. Edwardes, fixing his piercing gaze upon her. "Turn those restless eyes on me, and let me read ingenuousness in them."

Flora coloured.

"Do not be afraid of me, young girl," said her companion. "I see no harm in the caged bird breathing in freedom for a short hour. It may be against rules, but the longing of the soul for freedom is as great as its longing for love."

"Both are treasures," exclaimed Flora. "It is happiness to be alone and free, and it is certainly happiness to feel that somebody loves you."

"And misery to know that, in the wide world, there is no one who cares whether you laugh or grieve—whether you live or die," said Mr. Edwardes, mournfully.

Flora looked up at him compassionately.

"You may well pity me; you are beginning life, and you can scarcely yet know what your fate will be, whether to be unloved or not; I am nearer quitting it, and I can safely say my welfare has been a subject of consequence only

to one, and I never saw her after I was a boy."

Flora's tears gathered in her eyes as she said, —"I lost my mother also when I was a little child, and nobody has loved me since then, save one person, through whom I hope to escape soon from the unpleasant life I lead there," pointing to the Lodge.

"And that letter is to appoint a means of escape?" said Mr. Edwardes.

Flora looked confused, and fixed her eyes on the ground.

"If you were seeking for some one to convey that letter to the post-office for you, you could scarcely find one who would perform that office more faithfully than myself. You can trust to my honour, that its address shall be unknown to me ; I shall always be happy to oblige you at any cost, but it is for you to decide whether any unpleasant circumstances can justify your stealing from home, as if you were ashamed to let those who dwell there see a letter in your handwriting."

Flora was silent.

"You may have suffered much, and you may feel that severity justifies any innocent deception; but, remember it is not enough to be candid in your actions; truth should extend even to your thoughts, its beauty should shine in your countenance, and your eyes should express every emotion which arises within you."

Flora listened attentively.

"If you feel that there is no deception in that letter, that you do not care who sees it, I think I would advise you to allow it to go by the usual channel, for you should scorn the slightest sign of deceit; not only should your actions be truthful, but you should never give others an opportunity to form the least suspicion that they are not so. Your candour, your honour, should be yourself, and not approachable by any one's light words."

"You may see my letter, sir, I have no objection," said Flora, looking him full in the face. "It is addressed to one whom I love as a mother. You are almost a stranger to me, but I think I can trust you."

Mr. Edwardes took the letter, and as he

read, to Flora's surprise, a tear rolled down his bronzed cheeks, and blotted one of her words; his hand trembled, he read it over once or twice, and seemed almost to forget her presence.

At last he returned it to her, and as he did so he pressed her hand between both his, and looking at her with a countenance in which benignity and tenderness were expressed:—

“You will forgive me,” he said, “for the advice I have volunteered to bestow on one to whom it is superfluous; but a person, in whom I was once deeply interested, waited at this very gate for the carriage which was to convey her for ever from her home; a rash step expiated by years of sorrow, and which those who loved her best could not excuse, even when they thought her home had been far from happy.”

“My aunt Flora! they never speak of her; I know nothing about her. Were you acquainted with her?” cried Flora, eagerly; and again looking up to him with an unembarrassed countenance,—“I hope,” said she, blushing, “I hope you did not suspect me of doing

as she did. Temptation has never assailed me ; I cannot tell what I might do under its influence, but I think,—I hope,—I should never act so deceitfully. Do you think I should ? ”

“ No, my child, I trust not. I believe you are too pure, too innocent,” said Mr. Edwardes. “ And she must have been sorely tempted, and have suffered much, before she resolved to do it. Misery unnerves the mind ; it teaches strange doctrines ; therefore it is that I presumed to warn you.”

“ And your warning shall not be thrown away,” cried Flora, as tearing the letter into a thousand atoms, she scattered it around. “ However innocent the letter, I will never send one clandestinely ; never do anything for which I may have to blush.”

“ Many would venture to call my code of mortality severe,” said Mr. Edwardes, “ as many call me unsocial and strange ; but those who have been cruelly taught that deception and meanness exist in the world ; who have suffered by the hands of their brother-man, will strive to avert the least suspicion of deceit,

and will carefully encourage and nurse the beautiful flowers of candour and truth, which still bloom in the hearts of the young."

"Mr. Edwardes," said Flora, in a hesitating manner, "Mr. Edwardes, you are the first who has ever spoken to me thus, who has ever shewn me what was right and what was wrong. I have received orders to do well; I have been scolded for doing ill; but, believe me when I say, I have never been shewn the *necessity* of truth, or of openness, as you have displayed it to me to-day. I have never felt my responsibility as a moral being; nor perceived that, however others treated me, my duty to myself was still as binding as if I had been free."

"And I could not have expected you to treat me with such kindness, after my impertinent intrusion into your affairs," said Mr. Edwardes, smiling.

"I am indeed grateful to you for it; I cannot say how grateful," said Flora, fixing her expressive, deep blue eyes upon his face, "and I hope to shew you so by my actions."

"Heaven will reward you for it, my precious

child," said the old man, kindly. "And I rejoice I was so fortunate as to meet with you to-day."

Flora held out her hand to him. "I must return home," said she, "I can never forget all you have said."

"And your visit—have you given up all thoughts of that?"

"Yes," replied Flora, sighing; "unless Lady Beverstone herself invites me, how can I go?"

"She shall do so," exclaimed Mr. Edwardes. "I am going into her neighbourhood to-morrow. I will talk of you, and when she knows how glad you will be to see her again, she will certainly ask you."

Flora's countenance became radiant with joy. "That will be delightful!" she exclaimed.

Mr. Edwardes watched her as she rapidly returned home. The consciousness of being free, and of feeling satisfied with herself, made her actions less constrained than usual, and far more graceful. "They call her ill-looking," thought he. "To my mind no countenance which can be lighted up by noble sentiments is



unlovely. There is as much interest about her, as about the fearless Mabel. One has been chilled by the frosts of fear and unkindness, is delicate and requires more nursing; but both are fair young creatures, and their welfare is equally dear to me."

## CHAPTER XII.

I hate the face, however fair,  
That carries an affected air.

GAY.

THERE were a good many people now staying at Bathurst Lodge, and Mrs. Mulgrave flattered herself she was there as chaperon to Flora, —that she was initiating her in the art of receiving visitors; meanwhile, the house was pleasant, the country pretty, and her beloved Georgina was appreciated and admired.

But this could not last for ever; and she was beginning to be bored. Her husband would be soon returning from the moors, and want them both at home, and she felt she should be glad of any excuse to leave Bathurst Lodge, for she durst not propose it herself to Georgina; the bare mention of such a thing excited her anger, and Lord Eastland was always entreating her to prolong her visit.

While she was in this unsettled state, to her great surprise, she one morning received a letter from her sister-in-law, Lady Beverstone, begging her to use her influence with Lord Eastland to induce him to allow his daughter to pay her a long-promised visit.

This was delightful: the visitors were all going at the end of the week; and, if Flora went to Wales, Mrs. Mulgrave would have no longer an excuse for remaining.

She, therefore, went down to breakfast in the most agreeable humour, and, sitting next to Lord Eastland, began to tell him all the news her morning letters had contained. She could be very agreeable when she pleased; Georgina was not down, and Lord Eastland had nothing better to do than to devote himself to her mother. He began to feel, more and more every day, how utterly impossible it would be for him to live without the smiles and gay conversation of Georgina Mulgrave. How pleasant, instead of being formally welcomed home by Mrs. Ridley and Flora, to have that beautiful creature fly to meet him; she, who persuaded him

that in his presence was her joy, and that when he was absent, neither did smiles deck her lovely countenance, nor her wit provoke the laughter of all.

“ I have a boon to ask,” cried Mrs. Mulgrave ;  
“ and you must not be so cruel as to refuse me.”

Lord Eastland said, “ he should be happy to grant any request of hers ; but it was rash to promise beforehand.”

Flora was sitting next to Mrs. Mulgrave, rather amused at her eagerness, and totally unconscious of the subject of her request. Since she had seen Mr. Edwardes, she had felt gayer ; there was something gratifying in the remembrance of her sacrifice ; it had given her a first taste of happiness,—the joy of a mind at peace with itself. She felt she was capable of nobler sentiments ; that she might dare aspire to be better than she was ; that she might hope in time to resemble the good.

The air appeared lighter ; she could hold her head more erect than before, and her eyes could dare to seek any one’s countenance, for her soul shone forth in her glance, and fear could no

longer approach her. It was the proud consciousness of self-respect. It was the delight of ambition directed to a noble end,—it was hope brightening every thought: Georgina's taunts were almost powerless now. Flora had more agreeable subjects on which to reflect; and Miss Mulgrave began to lose the pleasure she had felt in making remarks about her, for they never excited even an unkind word.

"You must promise me unconditionally," cried Mrs. Mulgrave, "and I will tell you so far,—my request concerns your daughter."

"Why can she not ask for herself?" said Lord Eastland. "What can she want? however, I will promise."

"Lady Beverstone wishes you to allow her to go to Hawthorn Cottage, and stay for a month at least," answered Mrs. Mulgrave. "You see it is nothing so terrible after all."

"Flora should consider that it would be very rude to leave her visitors. I am surprised she should think of such a thing!" began Lord Eastland.

"Flora is quite innocent of the offence. I am

the culprit, and your vengeance should fall on me," replied Mrs. Mulgrave gaily. "Besides, every body is going this week ; at least, so they tell me ; and I am very glad, because, as I must go myself, I am selfish enough to rejoice that I leave no gay party behind me."

"*You* must go !" exclaimed her host.

"I must, indeed ! and I think I have paid you a tolerably long visit !"

At this moment, a tap at the window made every body turn their heads towards it, and Lord Eastland sprang up to open it ; for, there stood Georgina looking gayer and more lovely than ever.

"I saw the door open, and I could not resist the temptation of taking a little walk by myself," cried she, as she extended her finger to Lord Eastland. "It is such a beautiful day ; what a charming ride we shall have ! Where shall we go ? How lazy you are ! is there no plan fixed upon yet for to-day ? I shall have to set off by myself, as I did this morning."

Lord Eastland did not answer.

"You look very dull to-day,—you want me to enliven you. Now begin to think! where we shall go? I give you five minutes to decide, and I shall shut the window till you have thought; and I hope the knowledge that you are keeping me waiting for my breakfast, will sharpen your wits and wake up every spark of chivalrous feeling within you."

Georgina closed the window from the outside as she said this; and when Lord Eastland attempted to open it, she just extended her little foot and pushed the bolt to, looking excessively provoking the whole time.

Then she turned her back to him, and, taking her watch in her hand, fixed her eyes upon it. "Three minutes!" she cried, tapping against the window, "is our excursion decided upon yet?"

"I wish to speak to you,—to ask you one question," said Lord Eastland.

"Not till you have answered *my* request," cried Georgina laughing.

And again she pretended to be engrossed in observing the movement of the minute-hand.

Lord Eastland had no objection in the world to quizzing others ; but he had a great dislike to being laughed at himself, and he began to look very gloomy, when Georgina, with an impetuous movement that startled him, threw open the window and sprang into the room. "I am famishing," she cried, rushing up to the table and scarcely nodding to any one. "Did you ever know any thing so barbarous as that man, keeping me so long outside, because he was too lazy to settle where we shall go ? Now, Mr. Rochfort, you know this country well ; what is there to be seen ?"

Mr. Rochfort named several places. "It is unfortunate our party breaks up this week," said he, "for we shall not have time to go everywhere."

"You will be a great loss to us," said Georgina, in her blindest manner.

"You will not be sorry to return home, Miss Mulgrave ; you must be nearly tired of playing the agreeable," observed Mr. Rochfort, without taking any notice of the implied compliment.

"I do not go home instantly," replied Geor-



gina, "so I shall not begin to think about it yet."

"Lady Flora will miss you very much next week," said Mr. Rochfort; "you would have assisted her in entertaining Mrs. Neville."

"I will assist her, if Lady Flora likes it," and at the name of Mrs. Neville a shade gathered on her brow.

"How?" asked Mr. Rochfort, in a tone of surprise and sarcasm.

"I cannot tell how," answered Georgina; "I never arrange my speeches beforehand—I am too volatile."

"But I was almost persuading myself that you were going away the same day that I do," said Mr. Rochfort; "I shall be wretched if I leave you behind. I wish I could also stay."

"Why do you not do so?" asked Georgina in the most indifferent manner.

"Because I imagined, as Lady Flora was going to Wales, that no one would be remaining here; but I find my mistake—Lord Eastland does not accompany her."

“ I was not aware she was going,” said Georgina, haughtily.

“ Nor I, until ten minutes ago. I wonder you do not know, for it was Mrs. Mulgrave who arranged it all, at the same time that she announced your departure.”

“ My mother is very kind to tell every one her plans, before she condescends to inform me of them,” said Georgina in an ill-tempered tone, rising to leave the room.

Mr. Rochfort was the person whom Georgina most disliked ; he always contrived to tell her everthing that was disagreeable.

She walked into the drawing-room ; Lord Eastland was sitting at a table writing. He did not raise his head as she entered.

“ Where shall we go to-day ?” asked Georgina.

“ Any where you please, Miss Mulgrave.”

“ There are others to be consulted besides myself,” said Georgina, “ though you generally appear to forget it.”

“ I am sorry Miss Mulgrave should consider me wanting in courtesy to my guests ; I hope

others do not share her opinion," said Lord Eastland, proudly, for he was much annoyed.

"It surprises me any one should venture even to call Lord Eastland a man, since in common with other men they might also suppose him fallible, which would be a great offence," answered Georgina.

A servant entered to say the carriages and the horses were at the door.

Georgina went up stairs to dress in no very enviable mood. However, she determined she would not speak a word to Lord Eastland; but what was her annoyance to discover him in the carriage with her mother, Mr. Rochfort, and some lady, and herself condemned to ride with people who were perfectly indifferent to her.

She began to fear she had carried both her joke and her anger too far, and that she might stand a chance of losing the rich prize she flattered herself was within her grasp, so she changed her tactics, and contrived to look sad and penitent the whole of the day; but Lord Eastland never attempted to approach her, and

the consequence was, when she arrived at home, she went to bed ill.

When her mother was gone down to dinner, and Georgina was left to her own company, she began to repent her resolution, and to think it very dull remaining up stairs, when all besides were talking and amusing themselves. She felt angry with Lord Eastland for having deserted the riding-party, and thought him very soon offended. She forgot that, in virtue of her beauty, she had had great allowance made for her sharp speeches, and that, though people may applaud dubious pleasantries when others are the victims, they seldom fail to resent them when directed against themselves.

She was aroused from her reverie by the sound of carriage-wheels, and, looking out, perceived Mr. and Mrs. Neville, and very soon after she heard Mrs. Neville screaming on the stairs, "Do not wait dinner for me; I shall be ready in an instant."

This was the worst thing that could have happened. Lord Eastland would never feel her loss, for Mrs. Neville was just as gay, and in

her character of married woman was able to do far more strange and extravagant things; for Mr. Neville, who was still almost a boy in years, participated and assisted her in all her follies. They were always considered great acquisitions in a country house, where, if there is but one person bold enough to propose any extravagant freak, everybody else will be too happy to join in it.

Georgina hurriedly paced up and down her room. What should she do? Should she go down this evening, join in everything, and flirt with Mr. Rochfort, or should she remain in dignified retirement?

Her maid came in with some tea. "I am sorry to see you ill, Miss Mulgrave. Do not you think you can go down, for Lord Eastland has sent for the organist of the nearest town to play, and there is going to be dancing? I think it would do you good."

Georgina coloured with vexation. "That must be to gratify Mrs. Neville," thought she, "for we have never danced any other evening."

"If you come back in half an hour," said

she to her maid, "I think I will dress then, if I feel better."

Her mother did not come up to see how she was, for she hoped she was asleep, and she contented herself with sending a message to inquire after her.

Georgina had never before been so capricious or troublesome about her dress; she was usually contented with anything, provided it was fresh, for she knew that few could attempt to imitate her without appearing to great disadvantage. This evening she tried on half a dozen different wreaths,—roses, geraniums, lilies of the valley, May, bloomed in vain for her, and she decided at last to put nothing in her hair, and dress simply in white like Flora, and she judged very correctly, when she, as

"The naiad-like lily of the vale,  
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,"

appeared in the drawing-room after dinner, to the great astonishment of every body.

Mrs. Neville hurried towards her. "I am glad you are come, Miss Mulgrave, for we had

not enough ladies for a quadrille, still less a country dance, which is the best fun in the world. Do you not applaud my proposal to dance? Is it not much better than sitting quietly and being bored?"

"I am sure nobody was stupid at dinner," exclaimed Mr. Rochfort, "for every one laughed the whole time; and you can certainly not include Lord Eastland in your censure, for I have never known him so amusing."

"He was indeed delightful! You lost so much by not coming to dinner, Miss Mulgrave," continued Mrs. Neville.

Lord Eastland now himself approached to inquire after Georgina; but in a simply courteous manner, as to any indifferent guest.

As Georgina replied, she became paler; she felt she had certainly lost her power over him by a little malicious raillery.

Mrs. Neville began to sing a merry French air, and most of the company gathered round the pianoforte; among others, Lord Eastland. Mr. Rochfort alone approached the now deserted Georgina, and the anxious manner in which he

made inquiries about her health, and hoped she had not been rash in venturing down stairs, and the way in which he lamented her absence from the dinner-table, contrasted strongly (as he intended it should,) with that of his host.

Georgina shrank uneasily from his penetrating look, and slightly sarcastic smile. She knew at once that he understood all; that he had observed her successful efforts to gain Lord Eastland's admiration, as he had often before watched her schemes; and that, as he had in pity smiled upon *them*, so did he now in her hour of mortification.

Mrs. Neville's song suddenly ceased; the musician was arrived, and every one hastened into the hall, where dancing was to take place. Georgina heard Lord Eastland say to Mrs. Neville, "You are engaged to me."

Everybody seemed provided with partners except herself; the only person left in the drawing-room was Mrs. Ridley.

"Are you not fond of dancing, Miss Mulgrave?" she asked in her gravest tone.

"Not particularly so," replied Georgina.



“ Well ! that is a strange thing : you used to like it so much.”

“ I am not well to-night.”

“ I regret that extremely,” said Mrs. Ridley, arranging her eternal knitting, and drawing her chair nearer to the fire ; “ but I cannot say that you look the least ill.”

Georgina's vexation was too great to enable her to sit patiently to listen to Mrs. Ridley, so she went into the conservatory and there she strolled about uneasily, stopping to examine the plants, and pulling the unfortunate roses she gathered to pieces, and taking pleasure in seeing their petals scattered around. She heard the music ; she heard the merry voices, and she felt annoyed that no one had asked her to dance, when Mr. Rochfort appeared at the door. “ Are you becoming melancholy ? You, the gayest, the life of our party ! ” cried he. “ What can be the cause ? Will you dance with me ? ”

“ I am not in a humour for dancing,” said Georgina.

“ The humour will come, when you see everybody doing so.”

"I doubt it," said Georgina, her eyes filling with tears.

Mr. Rochfort look surprised, but he took no notice. "I have had Lady Flora for my last partner," said he. "What a very nice girl she is, if she were not so shy. She is so unworldly."

"Too much so," replied Georgina, in a depreciating tone. "But, poor girl! it is not her fault; Mrs. Ridley did certainly educate her as if she had been intended for a nun."

"Mrs. Ridley did no harm by *that*," said Mr. Rochfort. "But her extreme severity increased her pupil's naturally timid disposition."

"Has Flora been complaining to you?" asked Georgina.

"Lady Flora never complains; I wish she did," said Mr. Rochfort; "for even the chance remarks of her *friends*, sometimes make a great impression on her, and prey on her mind. If she *complained*, she would soon forget all about them."

"What a very disagreeable man Mr. Rochfort is," thought Georgina; but she said,—

"Flora is a very strange character. It is difficult to understand her."

"Yes, she is quite a study, perfectly unlike the modern race of girls; none of their eager love of dissipation, their giggling, flirting manner—their heartlessness," cried Mr. Rochfort.

"Upon my word, Mr. Rochfort, you are becoming perfectly eloquent. I never heard you praise any one so violently before."

"Because, I never think it necessary to add my voice to that of the hundreds who praise the successful *debutante*, who conspire, by flattery and folly, to spoil the little good that may yet remain in her. But I may surely tell, when I perceive in one, who is little noticed, traits which please me much."

"Certainly you may, Mr. Rochfort," replied Georgina. "It is so unusual to hear *you* approve any one or anything."

"Because I see so much to displease me, and because I will not be led in chains, and praise or blame only, as the world does."

"What *do* you think of Flora, then?"

"I will only tell you so far; with encourage-

ment, with affection, she would make an amiable woman ;—severity will spoil her.”

Georgina laughed—a mocking, cruel laugh.

“The waltz will be over, if we do not make haste,” said Mr. Rochfort.

“Do not let me detain you ; I cannot waltz ; I am not well enough.”

Lord Eastland, and some other people, at this moment entered the conservatory. The former looked with surprise at Georgina’s disturbed countenance, but they continued their conversation on indifferent subjects, in which Georgina did not attempt to join. The music was again heard, and all quitted the conservatory except Lord Eastland and Georgina.

He had felt ill at ease all the day. Mrs. Neville, with all her gaiety, was not half so agreeable as Georgina ; and this little misunderstanding would be rather pleasant, if it brought about the crisis he had so long desired, for he felt quite determined now that he could not live without Georgina ; he must offer her to share his name—his fortune—if he wished to be happy in future.

Miss Mulgrave had tact enough to perceive all this. She would not address him in her usual gay manner ; she walked languidly to the end of the conservatory, and as she passed him said,—“ Good night ! ” in a subdued and melancholy voice.

“ Good night, Miss Mulgrave ; I hope you will be better to-morrow, or you will not be fit to travel the next day. Do you still intend going ? ”

“ I do not know,” said Georgina, in a sad voice ; “ I am not my own mistress.”

“ Do you wish to go ? ”

“ Perhaps I do, *now*,” she replied.

“ Now ! why more to-day than any other day ? ”

“ Because—because I am sad, and not well ; and I am sure nobody will miss me,” answered Georgina, as she heard the sound of laughter. “ They are very happy and very gay without me now ; surely they cannot regret me when I am gone.”

“ Everybody is not among them,” said Lord Eastland.

“No; Mrs. Ridley does not admire dancing. She is knitting in the drawing-room.”

Lord Eastland bit his lips with vexation. Was this indifference natural, or was it put on?

“And myself,” said he in a low, suppressed voice—it was difficult to tell whether suppressed by anger or emotion. “And myself; does Miss Mulgrave count me for nothing in my own house?”

Georgina looked up and smiled; not the smile Mr. Rochfort had seen when he was talking of Flora; but a sweet and tender smile, such as a woman's should ever be. “Do you think it an easy task to forget *you*?” she asked, while the tears trembled on her beautiful eyelashes.

Lord Eastland forgot all about the scene of the morning; his wounded pride, his anger, his resolution of forgetting her, her deceitful temper, of which he had even indulged in remarks to Mr. Rochfort. He, who had never been known to think himself in the wrong, was ready to sue to her for forgiveness, because she

had laughed at and ill-used him ; and all this, so contrary to his nature, he was ready to do, because she was fair, because it was sad to see her beauty dimmed, sad to think he had been the innocent cause of it.

It is strange how foolish people are on some occasions ; and never more than when they are, or fancy themselves, in love. Here was a man, old enough to be Georgina's father, a man of the world, sensible and acute, deceived and entrapped by the manœuvres of a heartless girl ; one without a spark of feeling, except for herself, who had coolly and deliberately laid a trap to catch him, and who now flattered herself, as she watched his countenance, that she had been successful.

Poor Flora, cheerless as your life has been till now, it will be sadder in future, if Georgina dwell under the same roof with you !

" May I flatter myself you will think of me when you are gone ? " asked Lord Eastland, in an insinuating tone.

" Do you wish it ? " asked Georgina, tenderly. " Shall you remember *me* ? "

Lord Eastland was beginning to assure her in the most enthusiastic manner that her image would be ever in his thoughts, when Mr. Rochfort entered. Mrs. Neville had sent him; it was one o'clock, and she wanted everybody to join in a country-dance before the musician departed.

Georgina did not answer; she appeared to be too much engaged in her own thoughts, and Lord Eastland looked annoyed at this unexpected interruption. "I suppose we must go," cried he, shrugging up his shoulders; "but I do not feel at all up to it. I am not well. Will you be my partner, Miss Mulgrave?"

Georgina nodded her head.

"Remember, if you are well enough to dance, you are half engaged to me," said Mr. Rochfort.

"Is that true?" asked Lord Eastland.

Georgina could not deny it.

"What invincible attraction exists in this conservatory to-night?" cried Mrs. Neville. "Everybody who enters it is spell-bound. Mr. Rochfort, have you forgotten my message?"



"No, indeed, madam ! but they will not as easily obey your commands as I do."

"But they must, they shall ;" cried Mrs. Neville. "Lord Eastland, you *must* dance. If you are not engaged, you must be contented to have me as a partner, for every one else will be gone."

"Miss Mulgrave is engaged to me," cried Mr. Rochfort.

"Shall I ever get anybody to leave this odious conservatory ?" exclaimed Mrs. Neville, impatiently stamping her foot.

"Odious !" cried Mr. Rochfort, in a tone of surprise, and he repeated, half aloud, as Lord Eastland and Mrs. Neville walked away.

"Too dangerous, convincingly dear,  
In woman's eye the unanswerable tear."

Georgina looked angry ; she was indeed much annoyed, and partly thinking it would be more dignified, more correct, not to dance, except with Lord Eastland, and partly because she dreaded Mr. Rochfort's remarks, she decided to go to bed ; and after looking on for a few moments, as she left the room she saw the dreaded

Mr. Rochfort leading Mrs. Ridley to join the dancers. He was a strange man ; he had the power of always forcing people to do as he liked, and of teasing, more than any one who has ever lived before or since his day.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Wise men say, affection never dies ;  
No ! but it turns.

STORER'S *Life of Wolsey*.

It was strange how devoted Mr. Rochfort was to Georgina the whole of the following day ; how anxiously he sought to entertain her by talking on a variety of strange topics ; how he rode close by her side, and pursued her as her shadow, until she grew quite to detest him, not only because he had never been a favourite of hers, but also that on this day of all others—this day on the events of which her fate hung suspended, he, by his importunity, totally prevented her speaking to Lord Eastland.

When she had been younger, she had wasted her smiles on him ; but now her ambition had taken a wider range, and it was too bad, after a coolness of years, to take this wonderful de-

light in her company to-day. Her frowns, her indifferent replies, her evident dislike of his society, could not induce him to leave her; and she pettishly exclaimed at last, "You have not spoken to your favourite Flora to-day."

"Very little indeed," answered Mr. Rochfort; "for she appears to be so much amused by Mr. and Mrs. Neville."

"Strange taste to admire Mrs. Neville, I think," said Georgina.

"I did not say Lady Flora admired her, or would wish to imitate her," replied her companion. "But you must allow, Miss Mulgrave, that her manner affords a curious subject for observation, when one is not accustomed to its eccentricity."

"Flora has seen her before."

"Seen her, as she has done thousands, but never to know anything of her till now," cried Mr. Rochfort; and, after a slight pause, he continued, "you cannot tell how glad I am that she is going to Lady Beverstone's. I think to escape for a little time from that charming Mrs. Ridley, will do her wonderful good."

"How much interested you are about *her*," exclaimed Georgina; "one would fancy, were you not always considered insensible, that you were a little in love."

"If I were a few years younger, I might do many more foolish things," said Mr. Rochfort; "but this time your surmise is without foundation, Miss Mulgrave. *I* am not going to be so absurd as to propose to a girl young enough to be my daughter."

Georgina appeared absorbed in the examination of the view, discovered from the hill they had just mounted, and she did not reply.

"Do you intend visiting your aunt in Wales this autumn?" said Mr. Rochfort; "for I have a friend, a most agreeable man, who lives near there, and I may perhaps have the pleasure of meeting you?"

"Am I never to be safe from this disagreeable man anywhere?" thought Georgina. She replied, that she did not think they should go to Hawthorn Cottage before Christmas.

Luckily for Georgina, the ride was at an

end, and when she had taken off her riding-habit, she proceeded down stairs, ostensibly in search of a book, but really that she might meet Lord Eastland, and there, comfortably established in an arm-chair, as if he did not intend to leave it till dressing-time, was her friend Mr. Rochfort.

He began talking to her, and at that moment Mr. Neville and two other gentlemen, who had been shooting, appeared and joined the party. Mrs. Neville arrived a moment after, to look for her gloves.

"How sociable you all look, how charming!" she exclaimed; "as this is our last evening together, it *will* be much more amiable to sit here till the dressing-bell rings, than to shut ourselves up in our own apartments."

"I am glad to hear you propose it, Mrs. Neville," said Mr. Rochfort; "nothing is so pleasant as sitting in the twilight; and I will promise to tell some wonderful stories."

"Charming! charming!" screamed Mrs. Neville, clapping her hands with delight; and, ringing the bell, she forthwith despatched a

lively message to every one, inviting them to come.

And very agreeable were the next two hours to everybody but Georgina. The wildest and most improbable tales were told. Mr. Rochfort sang comic songs, and a gentleman belonging to the Irish law, told many absurd adventures which had happened to himself and friends, in the most amusing style.

There was an absence of all restraint; hilarity reigned supreme; all form seemed banished, and every one determined to be merry and easily amused.

"Fortunately, for the rest of the party," as Mrs. Neville soon exclaimed, "Mrs. Ridley could not come, so there was no chance of their being frozen by her cold distant look."

Flora sat very quiet, very still, by Mr. Rochfort and Mrs. Neville; but she enjoyed herself amazingly, and Mr. Rochfort kindly undertook to explain to her any Irish word, or any allusion, that she did not understand.

The dressing-bell was never so unwelcome. All lamented it, except Georgina, who jumped

up and hurried out of the room, and in an incredibly short space of time she was there again. She was congratulating herself on seeing no one, when she heard the door open, and Mr. Rochfort entered.

“ I thought I had been very expeditious to-day,” said he ; “ but I find myself surpassed by you. I fancied ladies were always very long in dressing ; that long hair cannot be plaited in a moment, and all those bows must want many minutes’ attention.”

“ Some ladies are certainly very slow,” answered Georgina ; “ but I must say, I consider it a waste of time.”

“ Miss Mulgrave has always a good reason for what she does,” said Mr. Rochfort ; “ I should like to know why she came down so much earlier than usual this evening.”

Georgina was saved the trouble of finding an answer by the entrance of Mrs. Ridley and Flora.

“ Do you know, Georgina,” said the latter ; “ that your kind mamma has settled all about my journey to Wales ; that I am really to go



and to stay for a whole month, and Mrs. Ridley is going to visit her brother at York till I return."

"I have no doubt *you* will find it very agreeable," answered Georgina.

"I did not think papa would have allowed me to go," said Flora; "but he agreed to it this morning, when Mrs. Ridley was so kind as to say it would be a good thing for me."

Mrs. Ridley had private reasons for advising it; she had ever admired Georgina, and pointed her out as an example to Flora; but she felt, if Miss Mulgrave became an inmate of the house, her hitherto unlimited sway would cease.

The evening passed away without anything occurring to satisfy Georgina. Since Mrs. Neville's arrival, she no longer sat next to Lord Eastland at dinner; and Mr. Rochfort made himself so agreeable, that he talked to her incessantly, and all the evening besides, on the plea of not having said half that he ought to have done on the subject they were discussing.

The next morning a good many of the party went quite early. Mrs. Mulgrave was the last,

and it was nearly one o'clock before she and Georgina were ready.

Lord Eastland went down with them to their carriage; but Mr. Rochfort insisted on himself and Flora doing the same thing, so there was no chance of any whispered words between them and their host.

Lord Eastland had felt very angry and much vexed the other evening when Mr. Rochfort interrupted him in the conservatory, for he had begun to think Georgina necessary to his happiness; but, besides being a proud, he was also a shy and cautious man, and when he found himself alone, and began to reflect, he thought some of his friends, and amongst them Mr. Rochfort, would think him foolish; at all events it was better not to decide in a hurry—he would write. But, when he thought of what he should say, he found it much more difficult and awkward to write than to speak, and he comforted himself by feeling he had had no opportunity of speaking—that Georgina must perceive that; and, consequently, if in a day or two he found himself unhappy at her loss, a

letter was soon sent. She therefore departed without a chance of accepting him ; returned as she had gone there, simply Georgina Mulgrave, not the affianced bride of Lord Eastland, as she had expected to do.

As the carriage drove away, Lord Eastland, instead of watching it until it was out of sight, hurried in to give some directions to his steward, as he now intended accompanying Mr. Rochfort to London ; and his last remaining guest continued standing at the door with Flora.

Both were silent for some minutes. Flora was thinking how gay Bathurst Lodge had been ; she scarcely knew her father in this new and sprightly character ; she thought, also, of her approaching visit, the first she had ever paid : she should have to judge for herself, to be her own mistress in many little things ; would this be pleasant or not ?

She almost started, so occupied was she with her own thoughts, when Mr. Rochfort said abruptly,—" Do you regret your visitors, Lady Flora ? "

"It would seem very dull and quiet for a few days, if I remained here all alone with Mrs. Ridley," answered Flora; "but you forget. I am going to visit Lady Beverstone."

"Shall you regret any one particularly?" asked Mr. Rochfort.

"I? No; I think not: but so many people made it look gay."

"Shall you forget me easily?"

"No," replied Flora, laughing. "You told us so many funny stories the other night; and, besides, you have been always so kind to me—it would be ungrateful."

"Then I may flatter myself you consider me as a friend, one you now know well, and who you think has your interest at heart."

"Yes! I have known you a long time," answered Flora, scarcely knowing what to say.

"And I have known your father a long time," continued Mr. Rochfort; "and I hoped to be also a friend to you as well as to him; but when I first saw you, I could not tell how that would be. You did not like me the first day."

"Not at all," said Flora, honestly. "You

teazed me ; but now I hope I am wiser, I do not mind."

"Because I hate affected girls, like some I could name ; but where a spark of original character remains, I can find much to like."

Flora thought this a very odd sort of conversation, and she did not know if she was doing quite correctly to stand there alone talking to a gentleman. Mrs. Ridley had so studiously instilled into her mind a fear of doing wrong, that she was continually thinking there might be harm in the simplest act.

She, therefore, said she thought her father would very soon be ready to go, and she would wish Mr. Rochfort "Good-bye," for Mrs. Ridley would be expecting her.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Rochfort, cordially shaking her by the hand. "You must not confound me with all your other visitors, for I hope I have succeeded in doing you a real service. I think I have consulted your happiness only in my actions, and I hope I have now secured it."

"My happiness," said Flora, sadly, for we

know she seldom allowed herself to be happy—happiness was a state she never imagined possible in her case.

“ I will enlighten you no further,—

‘ Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise.’

May such continue to be your case,” answered Mr. Rochfort ; “ and whenever you feel you need the services of a friend call upon me, and I will advance your wishes in the manner you desire, as, without your having made them known, I trust I have to-day.”

Flora pondered long on these strange words,—she could not understand them. Had they been used by another, a year or two back, they would have been twisted by fancy into something *very* affectionate—we are so prone to believe what we hope. But now she was unconscious of any particular favourite, and could afford to talk to any body with the utmost unconcern ; words once supposed full of meaning were indifferent now ; and after thinking about Mr. Rochfort until she was tired of her theme, she wisely gave it up, and busied herself with arrangements for her journey.

## CHAPTER XIV.

————— Wisdom!—  
To me thy better gifts impart,  
Each moral beauty of the heart  
By studious thought refined ;  
For wealth, the smiles of glad content,  
For power, its amplest, best extent,  
An empire o'er my mind.

MISS CARTER.

LATE on the Sunday evening, poor Flora experienced a terrible disappointment, for Mary, her maid, was taken ill, and could not, of course, accompany her on her journey on Monday. Notwithstanding her usual indifference, Flora wept bitterly. It was so sad to have to give up her visit. It was not like a common visit, but it was to the person she loved best in the world. None could know how she longed to see her again, how she now loved her, and how heart-breaking it was to have been so near going, and then to be disappointed. It was far

worse than having been refused at once, as she had expected, and when that ordeal had been safely gone through, it was very, very trying to be so unexpectedly prevented.

Besides, she had thought so very much about it, because it was the first time that she would have entirely escaped from thralldom. She did as children often do; she cried herself to sleep, for Flora (no doubt, she would have been offended to hear it), notwithstanding her past dream of philosophy, her glimpse into woman's life of feeling, her age, was, in truth, little better than a child. Unused to act in society, accustomed to continual watching, to being an automaton, moved by others and having no will of her own, she had passed unscathed through scenes where others take their form, their shape, and her mind was a strange chaos, thoughtful and simple at once.

When she awoke in the morning, with a confused remembrance of some sorrow, the first object on which her eyes rested was the tall figure of Mrs. Ridley, in her dressing-gown, standing close by her bedside.



She started up instantly, thinking that unwelcome sight boded no good.

"I have been thinking of your journey, Flora," said Mrs. Ridley. "Mary is too ill to leave her bed."

"I knew that would be the case, last night," thought Flora. "Why does she torture me, by repeating it now?"

"Lady Beverstone will be much disappointed, if you do not go," said Mrs. Ridley, "particularly since you wrote again yesterday, to say you would."

Flora fell back again on her pillow.

"What a shame to snatch me from the charms of oblivion for this!" thought she.

"I have carefully considered the subject," remarked Mrs. Ridley, "and, as your father is not here to consult, I think I can safely trust you with the housemaid, Martha, particularly as old Jephson will go with you, and will be sure to see you arrive safely. She is a very steady, well-behaved person, and of a respectable age, and I cannot imagine any harm can come of that. You will not have any

company, and will require very little dressing."

"I am sure, Mrs. Ridley, you are excessively kind," cried Flora, springing instantly out of bed; "it was so good of you to think of it."

Martha was summoned. She was willing to go, and hoped she should succeed in dressing Lady Flora to her satisfaction.

This sudden change was almost more than Flora could bear; she was so strangely gay, that Mrs. Ridley was forced to admonish her, and say she hoped she would do nothing incorrect, but that she could scarcely trust her.

They had five miles to drive to the station. It was a glorious autumnal day, and the quick drive through the morning air enlivened Flora more than she could have believed possible; her spirits rose at every step, and again she experienced that sensation of freedom, of daring to look at any one, of being ashamed of nothing, which had given her such delight after her last interview with Mr. Edwardes.

"Mrs. Ridley's road was the same as Flora's, for a little distance. Flora sat impatiently in

the carriage; she thought they should never be off; but that shrill, wild, unearthly whistle was heard, and they were flying along at the rate of thirty miles an hour. The carriage shook a little, and Mrs. Ridley complained of it; but Flora liked to feel they were moving; there was to her a sensation of pride and of power in their rapid movement, similar to that felt by those "who breast the mountain wave;" the motion is pleasure enough.

She wished only that the fresh air might blow upon her, but Mrs. Ridley kept the windows shut.

With what joy did she hail the station where her governess left her. She wondered what her long conference with old Jephson could be about.

"Does Mrs. Ridley think I am not safe in a *ladies' carriage*, locked in from all intruders, except a nurse and children, or any old lady, afraid to dare the adventures of a usual carriage," thought Flora, but at every station, to her evident indignation, the old man peeped into the carriage.

They arrived at the place where they were to leave the train, but they had still twenty miles to post. Flora had never been in a fly, and the novelty made her think it very charming, and still more so, when she found the only one at home was an open one. She told Martha she was sorry it was not a cart.

It is impossible to describe her sensations, as she beheld from afar, the beautiful mountains rearing their blue heads to the sky; and, as the road became more hilly, and as, from a tolerably elevated point, she caught a distant view of the sea, her rapture exceeded all bounds. Martha was surprised to see her usually quiet young lady so excited, but she did not venture to forbid her standing up in the carriage, as Mary would have done, nor did she prevent her inquiring from old Jephson the name of any village she passed, or of a taller peak than usual.

The sun set over the sea in magnificence, tinging the hills with extraordinary colours. Flora was almost wild, and it was well for her that she was nearly arrived at her journey's

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end, for Martha was fearful she would wish to get out and walk, and that they should lose their way, or some terrible adventure befall them.

They passed a gentleman's house, in one of the valleys, embosomed in trees ; and then a few straggling houses, almost a village, and then drove into a large field, or miniature park, and stopped at the door of a small nice-looking house. A servant was standing there, so there was no necessity to knock, and Flora was instantly ushered into a bright cheerful-looking room, where sat Lady Beverstone working at the same table where her son was drawing, and Lord Beverstone, in an arm-chair at some distance, was reading aloud to them.

Lady Beverstone instantly rose and embraced Flora. Lord Beverstone cordially welcomed her ; but Cecil contented himself with simply bowing, for Flora had never chosen to notice him in London, and he consequently felt a little awkward in offering his hand to her.

Flora began to detail her journey, and to say how beautiful she had found the country,

how much it had even exceeded her expectations; and Cecil looked at her in surprise. Could this be the dull, cold, proud girl, he had known in London?

Lord Beverstone inquired very affectionately after Mrs. Ridley?

"She is gone home for a visit," answered Flora.

"Are you not very sorry to lose her?"

"No," said Flora. "I am free."

This was a sentiment pleasing to Cecil, for he still remembered his school-days; and pronounced, as it was, in an honest tone from the heart, "perhaps," he thought, "she is not so bad as people in London imagined."

There was a quiet elegance and cheerfulness about this cottage which did Flora's unsettled mind good; she had never retired to rest so placid, so composed, so happy before.

The breakfast hour was early, and Flora was the first down stairs. She stood at the open window and inhaled the morning air, looking with envy at the pretty little garden, and longing to go out; but not daring to

attempt it, because, in the whole course of her life she never remembered doing such a thing as going out without a bonnet and shawl.

After breakfast she returned again to her post.

"Are you fond of walking?" asked Lady Beverstone.

"Yes, I delight in it," cried Flora.

"I am sorry I am not well enough to take long rambles with you, as I could wish to do, dear Flora; but Lord Beverstone or Cecil will shew you all the beauties of the neighbourhood."

"How very kind," replied Flora, "how pretty the garden is; how nice to be able to slip out of the window at once, instead of having as far to go as we have at home!"

"Why do you not explore the garden?" said Lady Beverstone; "I see you are desirous to do so. It is so small, it will not take you long; and meanwhile I must go and look after my household affairs."

Flora stood still, hesitatingly, "May I go without my bonnet?" she asked.

"If you are not afraid of cold."

“Oh, no!” cried Flora. “Not in the least!” and out she went boldly.

Some days are epochs in the history of the mind! The day of her mother’s death had acquainted Flora with *sadness*; this day taught that in life there is also *gladness*, if it be sought aright.

This day, when escaping from her friend’s room, she wandered over the green turf, free and uncontrolled; when she viewed those bold and beauteous mountains, whose wildness soothed her troubled soul, and told that the artificial was far away; and she was communing with Nature—this day when she first felt *free*! FREE! what magic in that word! Free to think! Free to act! to pursue the course she deemed aright; and, in an enthusiastic mind capable of appreciating the joys of freedom, that course must ever tend to good!

From this day Flora entered on a new life, not only externally, but of the soul and heart. Her mind burst its fetters; she thought, as well as acted, and, in a short time, she could scarcely have been recognized as the same person.



From the tyranny of a *death-in-life*, or a merely vegetative existence, in which all the nobler feelings, the varied emotions, the faculties which distinguish mankind from the animal creation, were as if they existed not ; from this state of mental torpor and of unvarying sadness, Flora suddenly awoke with the removal of the incubus which had hung over her,—that fear which had almost annihilated her individual being. But, it was an awakening like that produced by a sudden shock ; and it required time to allow the mind to shake off the impressions it had received during its sleep, and to enter into all that was going on around it.

We can imagine the feeling of enjoyment the commonest and simplest occurrences of life give to the infant, to whose bounded perception a new toy, a new face, a longer stroll than usual, is an event ; and its glee on all these occasions proves that *gladness* is an inherent property of human nature. Or, to one whose visual darkness, or whose deafness had deprived him of all the pleasures of sight, or of hearing, suddenly restored to their possession, or acquir-

ing them for the first time, what pleasure would he not discover in things which to us are so common that we never heed them?

And thus it was with her. Accustomed to a life of unvarying and wearisome monotony, disgusted with all knowledge on account of the distasteful manner in which it was communicated to her, imagining that philosophy consisted in indifference to all and everything, viewing the changes of the physical world as things that must be, not as objects from which to glean a momentary joy, and removed from solitude into the busy idleness of the metropolis, where at every instant her pride was wounded by the little notice taken of her; she who had hitherto imagined herself of *some little* consequence; too proud to condescend to be amused, and yet too conscious of her deficiency and her awkwardness to attempt to amuse; at the same time looking down on those around her, and yet having the conviction forced on her mind that in their turn they despised her, and that they did not think it worth while to attempt to thaw the reserve in which she was

enclosed ;—it is difficult, perhaps, to imagine misery more acute than hers—a position more full of sadness ; and yet she was possessed of wealth, of rank ; besides which nature had endowed her with a mind to the full as capable of improvement as those bestowed on others, and talents which required only to be awakened from their torpid state to minister to her own pleasure and that of her companions. Such wilful waste of the means of enjoyment is surely sinful !—and in her case, although it arose partly from fear, and from an injudicious education, it might also be traced to wounded pride, which, hurt by Mrs. Ridley's constant scoldings, withdrew into itself, and took refuge in indifference from the charge of fallibility.

Freedom first permitted thought to resume its functions, and from the absence of all which had contributed to her constant mortifications, her mind acquired a healthier tone.

When not under the influence of a false train of reasoning, Flora was possessed of a certain degree of common sense.

She was able to reflect on what she saw, and

she was not unobservant of the spectacle presented by a woman like Lady Beverstone, her equal in birth and position, her superior in mind and talent, who, rudely torn from a magnificent and luxurious home and placed in a position of comparative poverty and insignificance, preserved her cheerfulness amid all her misfortunes, did not think it beneath her to be amused even by trifles, and was as dignified in her retirement as formerly in her splendour.

Treated as an equal by one so worthy of admiration, her pride was flattered at the same time that her affections were aroused, and while she felt she owed a duty to society, that it was her place to be amusing as well as be amused; that it was failing in kindly feeling to disdain to participate in the amusements of others; the love she felt for one whom she regarded almost as a mother, made her anxious as much as possible to resemble her, and from her converse with her it was—the dark mists of pride, error, and fear first cleared away—that Flora in fact began to exist.

Every hour passed at Hawthorn Cottage

improved her capability of enjoyment. She could not only *pretend* to feel gay, she could actually *be* so. It was like a new springing into existence ; it was like the crysalis, when it bursts from its dark prison, a joyous butterfly formed to sport in the summer breeze. Every moment brought with it fresh delight ; every instant discovered a pleasure unknown before ; every object was invested with a thousand new charms. Wherever she turned, on whatever her eyes rested, the spirit of gladness seemed to hover around her : its strains of joy for ever murmuring in her ear, its joyous form for ever before her eyes :—it appeared to her now as if it were scarcely possible to be sad.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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